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June 1788

SELECT SERMONS

OF

THE LATE REV. N. P. KNAPP, A. M.,

RECTOR OF CHRIST CHURCH, MOBILE, ALA.,

EDITED BY

REV. WM. JOHNSON, A. M.,

RECTOR OF CHRIST CHURCH, TUSCALOOSA.

WITH

A BRIEF SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF THE REV. MR. KNAPP DURING HIS CONNEXION
WITH THE DIOCESS OF ALABAMA: BY THE EDITOR.

PHILADELPHIA:

HERMAN HOOKER, CORNER OF CHESTNUT AND EIGHTH STREETS.

1855.

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ASTOR, LENOX AND
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TO
THE CONGREGATION OF CHRIST CHURCH,
MOBILE,
These Select Sermons
OF
THEIR LATELY DECEASED RECTOR,
THE
REVEREND NATHANIEL P. KNAPP,
ARE
Affectionately Dedicated
BY
ELLEN LEE KNAPP.



SKETCH

OF THE

LIFE OF THE REV. N. P. KNAPP,

DURING HIS CONNEXION WITH THE DIOCESS OF ALABAMA.

THE Rev. N. P. KNAPP, A. M., came to the diocess of Alabama, in the year 1837, taking as his first charge in this diocess a missionary station in Lowndes county, where a few zealous churchmen had associated themselves into a parish, called St. Peter's. Though he soon formed a strong attachment to this little congregation—an attachment of which they were well assured—yet the sphere being a very limited one, he remained but a short time in this situation. It was during a brief sojourn in Montgomery, subsequent to his resignation of St. Peter's, that a correspondence was opened with him by the vestry of Christ Church, Tuscaloosa, which resulted in his accepting the rectorship of that church. He entered on his duties in that parish in May or June of 1837. His ministry here was highly useful during the five years of his residence in the parish. In the summer of 1843, while on a visit to his friends at the north, he fell in with the Rev. Dr. Lewis, then rector of Christ Church, Mobile. The health of the latter had, at that time, become very much impaired. It was a summer of dreadful suffering in Mobile,

when the yellow fever was literally raging there. Under such circumstances was it, that the fearless heart of Mr. Knapp bore him up in acceding to the proposal of Dr. Lewis, to go to Mobile and supply his absence, until he could return to the parish.* Living witnesses can testify to the faithfulness with which he discharged all the duties that devolved on him. Unknown to the people to whom he went, he yet knew that the introduction to them, through the work he went to perform, could not fail to make him known, most favourably known to them. And as to his own acquaintance with them, it was enough for him to know that they were the afflicted, the sick, the dying, and the dead. A stranger to the climate, he yet shunned not exposure, for he feared not death. He was sustained long enough to render essential service; but finally was himself attacked by the disease. He was brought to an extremely low condition, from which as soon as he had sufficiently recovered, (the health of the city being restored, and the rector of the parish having returned,) he went, by advice of his physician, to Cuba, where he remained part of the winter of 1843. On his return from Cuba, he accepted the charge of St. John's Church, Montgomery,† where he spent four years of usefulness.

In 1848, he was invited to the rectorship of Christ Church, Mobile. Upon that charge he entered immediately. In the very meridian of his usefulness, he there

* Mr. Knapp had, while at the north, resigned the church in Tuscaloosa.

† He had received the call to that church, while in Mobile; and accepted of it on condition of not entering on the duties until he should have made the trip to Cuba, which, it was thought, would conduce to his more speedy recovery.

ended his days. He had been obliged, on account of his health, to make a voyage to Europe, during the summer of 1853. He timed his return so as to reach New York in season to attend the sitting of the General Convention, of which he had been elected a member, by the preceding Convention of Alabama. On his arrival in New York, almost the first intelligence, regarding the object of his greatest anxiety, was, that the yellow fever was prevailing to the most alarming extent ever known in the city of Mobile. The writer of this article witnessed his anxiety to depart forthwith to his post; and knows that in spite of the earnest request of his friends that were about him, and notwithstanding the repeated despatches from Mobile, even forbidding his return to the city, he could not have been induced to remain in New York, had not his bishop added his advice also, that he should not return. It was altogether proper that he should not. The congregation had parted with him for the whole summer, on the one consideration of his health. And now that he seemed just prepared to enter fully upon his ordinary duties, it could not appear right, that he should suddenly rush to the undertaking of such arduous labour, in the midst of such extraordinary danger as was before him. And he yielded, though reluctantly, and did not return to the city until he had been informed that he could do so with safety. But man's ignorance of God's ways was forcibly brought to our conviction, when, only a few months after his return to his parish and family, it became too evident that his course was run. After a distressing illness, at the height of his usefulness, surrounded by a devoted congregation—now but recently wel-

comed after a long absence, back to his most interesting family, he falls under the disease from which he suffers, himself relieved, but friends and family left to mourn. He died on the 17th of February, 1854.

The name of Rev. N. P. Knapp will never disappear from the history of the church in the diocese of Alabama. When those have departed after him, who knew him in the flesh, and none are left who were personally acquainted with him, still will his name be most prominent on the journals of the Alabama Conventions from the year 1837 to the year 1854. The ease and grace with which he conducted the business of committees, and drew up their reports, and the cheerfulness with which he bore any burden imposed on him, were sure to bring upon him more than his just share of work.

But it is not on diocesan journals alone that his name will be found. He was a tutor of the General Theological Seminary, and several times a member of the General Convention.

It would not be necessary to add a word in regard to those domestic qualities that contribute to the happiness of a family, and the enjoyment of visiting friends, if these qualities had been possessed only in an ordinary degree. But it is due to him to say that his character was eminently adorned with them. His heart was a warm one. His feelings were deep—his emotions sincere. As a natural consequence, his affliction could not have been overlooked; it manifested itself to all about him, and his family presented a scene of true happiness. As a social gentleman, he possessed, in a most eminent degree, the faculty of being easy and familiar, without even vergin

on a letting down of himself below true dignity. It was in the exercise of this faculty, that he made himself in all respects a most delightful companion. But his sympathy was not confined to emotions of pleasure. He felt not only with the joys of others, but with their sorrows too; seeming to perform spontaneously both the exercises enjoined by the apostle: "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep." The rich and the poor alike were cared for by him. Only one person can be said to have been less the object of his regard than others,—and that one was himself; for selfishness was a stranger to his bosom.



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SELECT SERMONS.

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THE striking and beautiful imagery of the prophetic writings helps greatly to heighten the eloquence of their teaching. Poetry has ever been so closely joined with the gift of prophecy that it has been deemed and called *inspiration*. And God, in his wisdom has ordained that the heart of man should be reached through the imagination, thus making instrumental to his salvation a faculty commonly used only for his gratification.

Our text is a proverbial expression containing two illustrations, both pointing to the same lesson, to be learned first by the prophet himself, and through him by all to whom it may be applied. The lesson is, that, if men are unable to contend with lesser evils, how shall they be able to meet those which are greater?

The prophet had complained of the men of Anathoth, his fellow-citizens and neighbours, who had rejected his authority and teaching, and treated him ill. For that ill usage he invokes God's judgment upon them. God answers his complaint, by calling to his mind the lightness of his trouble caused by these men who were comparatively powerless, when compared with that which would befall him, when he should encounter the fierceness of enmity and opposition which would be displayed by the chief men of power at Jerusalem.

The swelling of Jordan, or the yearly overflow of its banks, at harvest time, or in the spring, is often used as an image of power, moral, as well as physical, especially of that which causes terror and dismay. This periodical swelling of the river drives the lion from the thick coverts of trees which fringe its banks. And the image of the lion from the swelling of Jordan is used by the prophets to express either an overwhelming weight of calamity, or the rushing of fierce emotions under the influence of any besetting trial. And as the peaceful flow of the stream at ordinary seasons differs from its impetuous course at the time of overflow, so do the trials of men differ under the visitings of God's chastening power.

The meaning of the text may therefore be readily seen. The Lord uses the same imagery which marks the character of the writings of his prophets, and bids him consider how he, whose heart is dismayed at the lesser trials of which he complains, will be able to bear up under the more terrible visitings of sorrow which would afterward come upon him. If running with footmen be wearisome, how much more so would be a race with horses? And if in quiet times you are ready to sink under the weight of trial, what will you do when sorrow comes as an overrunning flood?

The design of this proverbial use of the two-fold image, was to prepare the prophet for that discipline which belonged to his office, as a teacher of truth, which would be unacceptable to those to whom he was sent;—to intimate that, instead of repining at the measure of sorrow already experienced, he should allow it to work in him a fitness to endure the much greater measure which would be allotted to him.

The same lesson may be learned by every minister of God's word, and indeed also by every subject of God's providence. The people to whom he is sent would have him prophesy smooth things, and "speak peace, when there is no peace;" would have him bear all their burdens, sins included, without mention thereof, and give *his life* for those who will scarcely sustain that life, so necessary to themselves when they are in sorrow. He is taught by the word of God to make all the lighter trials of his calling the means of fitting him for the heavier tribulation which, if meekly borne, will fit him for the kingdom of heaven.

But this passage of holy writ has in it a lesson for many besides the prophet and his brethren, who are called to the holy ministry. The whole people of God, every church and congregation of worshippers, may apply the spiritual teaching which it offers, to themselves, as subjects of God's discipline by means of providential dispensations. And they may do so as individuals, or as a people, according to the circumstances of their condition. We now propose to apply the text, my hearers, to you, as the subjects of God's providential dealings, whether in your individual or your social capacity. And we pray God to impress your hearts with such a sense of the wisdom and goodness of his dealings, as will lead you to a holy reverence of his name and submission to his will.

Leaving, for the present, the consideration of your individual experience of domestic sorrow, we would invite your attention to God's dealings with you as a community, in all time past, and especially during the past summer. Perhaps the memory of some of you goes no further back. That of others includes a much larger history. But, that all may unite in the exercise, review your history during the year now drawing to a close, marked indelibly by the visiting of God's providence in the shape of a destructive plague. Memory shrinks appalled from the review of a period of such gloom and dismay. And there are few spectators of the scenes of sorrow, and sharers of the apprehension of woe, which pervaded the community, who would not say earnestly, "May we never be thus visited again!" But the visitation has been received by different members of the community with very different feelings. Some of you have, perhaps, been rebellious against the chastisement of God, and have asked indignantly when called to offer your thanksgiving for the mercies which even, in the midst of sorrow, may be discerned, and should be mentioned before God, "What have we to be thankful for? For the pestilence which has wasted our city, and destroyed our business?" Sinful man! Do you fix your heart and your hope upon worldly gain so much that you can thus complain of God's dealing with you? And do you expect to live forever to enjoy what God enables you to gain by traffic in healthy seasons? or do you hope to carry with you to the grave, and to the unseen world beyond it, all that you have gained by trading? If not, of what use is

what you have, without life, and the capacity to enjoy? And has not God left *you this*, while he has taken so many others from their worldly goods? And will you employ the breath which he has graciously prolonged, in impious complaints of hard usage? Will you not rather spend it in praise for his mercy, which has spared you to enjoy your gain, while he has taken from this world many from whom you had hoped to make more gain? Is there no call for thanksgiving from you, as one of a community, tried indeed severely, but spared to say how severely?

Look on the visitation of God as a warning of deeper sorrows which may befall those who are not moved by this to seek the Lord and to serve him. If the pestilence which walketh in darkness and wasteth at noonday be deemed a dreadful scourge, how much more dreadful would be the affliction, if God should send his other sore judgments, famine and the sword? Is there no conceivable chastisement greater than that which has been laid on us? And may we not by rebellious complaining, or by insensibility to the warning of this, bring down upon our heads that greater weight of sorrow? Is it for any deserving on our part that God has spared us? Or did we not *need* the chastening which we have received?

We put these questions home to the consciences of those who never have viewed the trials of life religiously, and ask them, (if they do not deny the existence of a God,) whether there be not a purpose in all God's doings? and if a purpose, a wise and good one? Then let them consider what God would have them learn from his obvious dealings, as in the time of wide-spread and wasting sickness. The daily instances of mortality should teach the living to lay to heart the lesson that all must die. But each mortal thinks all men mortal but himself, or if he too must return to dust, that he will live till old age shall give him warning of the time to set his house in order.

When, however, death in fearful shape stalks about the land, and lays his victims in heaps before the eyes of an appalled community, then the hitherto careless one is reminded that at the next sweep of the scythe he himself may be cut down. This hint of his danger will, if it does not harden still more a heart already hardened into insensibility to God's teachings, rouse it to a lively sense of the need of preparation for the call to *judgment*. For *this* is the

call of death, and this it is which gives to death its most dreadful sting. But how shall the sinful man, thus warned, deal with the warning? Shall he wait till another season of fatal pestilence be ordered by the providence of God? Or, shall he not rather, with humble thankfulness for the mercy which has spared him this time, earnestly set about the work of preparation for death, which may come at any moment, and may, if he wait for more warning, find him utterly unprepared?

We speak to those who, not being ready to bow meekly to the summons to depart from this world, look back with a shudder upon the fearfulness and anguish caused by the recent visit of the plague which has wasted our city, and ask them, if they have thus quaked at the perils which beset them, how they would meet chastisements tenfold more frightful, which may befall them in this world, and especially the swellings of God's wrath in the day of judgment, if they shall not have heeded all his merciful warnings?

Take heed wisely to all the wise teachings of your God, that ye may not be afraid to meet him when he shall come near to you in judgment at the last day.

Remember, God does not allow the most wicked of his creatures to perish without such rebuke as will bring their blood upon their own head. Beware, then, lest you fearfully increase your weight of condemnation by despising the warnings of his afflictive providences: the plain pointings of his mercy to the path of righteousness and peace. In the words of the prophet to his chastised people, "Why should ye be stricken any more?" Provoke not your God by your hardness of heart to visit you again with a more destructive plague. But give yourselves up to his service, in the fruitful profession of a sincere faith in him who has overcome death, and "opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers."

There are others, who, although not influenced by *religious* views of the affliction which they deem grievous, do say that they thank God for the mercy which has spared them. But thank him for what? For the continuance of a life spent in defiance of his law, or contempt of his promises! What value has that thankfulness in the sight of God? Thank him for letting you heap up wrath against the day of wrath! Do you mean this?

It amounts to this, if you choose to spend that *spared* life merely in the pursuit or the enjoyment of worldly gain. Let not this be your purpose. But show your thankfulness to God by giving him your heart in faith, love, and obedience. Ask yourself, as you seriously consider God's mercies, in the words of the steward to his master's debtors, "How much owest thou unto my Lord?" And you may be assured that without any help from the suggestion of that same steward, you will *set down far less* than you owe.

But if you confess that you owe *life*, estimate the value of that life, not as the means of selfish gratification, but as the seed-time of an existence whose character will depend upon your culture, and be *endless misery* or *eternal glory*. We speak as to wise men, judge ye what we say. And may God give you grace to judge wisely for your soul's peace and welfare! May he lead you to an open confession of his Son Jesus Christ, in the ordinances of the church, and in the faithful following of his precepts in the midst of a wicked world!

We appeal to those who, having large households, and an abundance of this world's goods to share with those who are dear to them, have been spared from the pestilence in the midst of surrounding distress and death. If they have never yet dedicated their substance or themselves to the service of God, how can they now so fitly testify their thankfulness for the mercy which they have received, as by the solemn confession made before God, in the way of his own appointment, through his Son Jesus Christ, that they owe and will henceforth give themselves, soul and body, to his service? Will they not employ the days which remain to them in such exercise of religious faith and walk, as will not only glorify God, but prepare them for visitations of his providence, under which they may be called to suffer, even unto death; and for the eternal rewards of the life beyond the grave?

Suppose he had in his wisdom seen fit to take all. If in time of comparative peace, thou hast been wearied, how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan? Might he not have gathered into his garner all the precious seed which he laid in your lap? And may he not do it, if your heart rebels at his lesser bereavings? If he has drawn near to you once, twice, or thrice, and whispered in your ears, in tones which struck trembling into the heart, "If

thou dost love me, give me a pledge," will you withhold it, saying, "Ah! Lord, how can I give up the treasure which is bound up in my heart?" Might not your Lord say, "Shall I not do what I will with my own?" Could you deny the claim, if it touched all you have? You deem God a hard master, perhaps. But does he demand payment of a tithe of what you owe him? All his servants are very unprofitable, and they should own it. But how little we think of our many sins, and the forbearance of God, who might well be wearied with them!

St. Peter thought it very hard that his Lord should doubt his love, and should ask him thrice, "Simon, lovest thou me?" He did not then consider that he had as many times denied that Lord, even with an oath.

Bereaved by the hand of the Lord, reflect how much you have grieved him by forgetfulness, neglect, or open denial. Might he not have blotted you out of his book of remembrance forever, as fully as he has, for Christ's sake, blotted out the sins of his penitent and believing children? He speaks to you, as to the Psalmist of old, "Be still, and know that I am God."

Though you be wearied in the race of life, "drink of the brook by the way"—the fountain of everlasting life,—and your drooping head shall be lifted up. Spare yourself further and more grievous trials by proving the sufficiency of those which you have borne. Live near to God, that he may not deem it needful to draw thee to him by loosing the cords which bind thee to earth. If you would be with those whom God has taken to himself you must surely be with God.

Be much in prayer to him and in communion with him. Rehearse to yourself the precious tokens of his love; his words of holy counsel and glad assurance. Gather within your soul the comforts of the Holy Spirit—the soothing, cheering influences of grace which are given to faith. Feed upon the Lord in his holy Supper, the bread which spiritually strengtheneth man's heart, and the wine which, in the same sense, giveth him a glad countenance. Take the Lord for your Counsellor, your Guide, your Comforter, and your Support. Then you may run the race of life without being wearied, yea, even the swelling of Jordan shall not appal you—but you may meet it calmly, and pass through it safely, to the Canaan which lies beyond it.

And let not the teachings of God's providence be neglected by any of us. If we have professed to be governed by his law, and guided by his counsel, as we have, if we have confessed him in the ordinances of the church, let all the trials which we have borne, be used with careful self-discipline, for our furtherance in holiness.

Let them prompt us to a diligent endeavour to stir up within us the gift of God's grace, by the faithful use of all his appointed helps and means, that we may prove ourselves to be his servants, and the true heirs of the glorious inheritance through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us strive so to gird ourselves with the whole armour of God, that we may be able to resist all temptations, and sustain all trials, and finally stand firm and upright before the judgment seat of the Lord, supported by his divine testimony to our righteousness through faith in him. May God thus sanctify our experience of his dealings with us, however afflictive, and lead us, though it be through much tribulation, to the kingdom of heaven, the joy and bliss of eternal life.

SERMON II.

“One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.”—JOHN ix. 25.

IN the chapter from which we have taken these words, we have a very clear and interesting account of a miraculous cure of blindness, performed by our Lord Jesus Christ. The subject upon whom he exercised his divine power, was a man of full age, who had been blind from his birth, whom Jesus saw as he passed by on the Sabbath day, and pitying, healed in the following manner. He anointed the eyes of the blind man with clay, and then directed him to go wash in the pool of Siloam. The man went, and washed, and returned seeing.

A miracle so remarkable as this, could not fail to attract the attention of the people, especially of those who had been wont to see the subject of it sitting by the wayside, begging alms. These questioned him closely in regard to the *person* who wrought the miracle, and the *mode* of effecting it. He told the circumstances exactly as they took place. He answered: “A man that is called Jesus, made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash; and I went and washed, and I received sight.” They then brought the man to the Pharisees, the leading members of the great council or Sanhedrim, to be questioned by them. These rulers were not disposed to admit that any miracle had been wrought by one whom they had persecuted and sought to destroy, and they tried various expedients to induce the man to declare Jesus an impostor. When they found that he persisted in the account which he had given of the miracle which had been wrought for his benefit, some of them used the argument, that Jesus *could not* be “of God,” because he had done this on the Sabbath, thereby breaking the law of Moses. “Give God the praise,” said they; “we know that this

man is a sinner." But the man thought it *very strange that any one could do such a miracle, unless God were with him* to give him the power; and as he *knew* experimentally that a miracle *had been* done, he was unmoved by all that the Pharisees could allege against it. He therefore answers them boldly and positively, "Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: *one thing* I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see."

Such a change of condition as *he* underwent *physically*, the *Christian experiences spiritually*, through the power of Christ. And the words of the text very fitly convey the testimony which the converted sinner can give to his *own experience* of the saving grace of God. And we shall consider them in their application to a subject of much interest and importance, but which is often greatly misunderstood, and treated with disrespect and scorn by the irreligious—we mean *Christian experience*.

By Christian experience, we mean an experience of the power of the Gospel to enlighten the mind, renew the heart, and to reform the life. It is a knowledge of the truth in its practical operation, not only of truth in itself, but of what it is capable of doing for the character of those to whom it is addressed. Now, whatever may be the delusion of *some individuals* in regard to experimental religion, it will not justify the contemptuous skepticism with which all pretensions to an acquaintance with it are treated by the irreligious. For it is certain that Christ intended and promised, that his word should have the power which we claim for it, and that his disciples *proved* the truth of his doctrine by their *consciousness* of that power. And it would be very absurd to deny that Christians, in these days, who have the same Gospel that the first Christians had, have also the *same privileges* of faith, the *same experience* of its power. We mean, of course, that power which constitutes *conversion*, *not* the miraculous power, which ceased when the church became fully established. Now the experience of this power is manifested in the *feelings* and in the *conduct*. And it is quite as unreasonable as the opinion of the *most deluded professor* can be, to conclude, because some persons claim *religious feeling* without showing the corresponding conduct, that those who *can give this clear evidence* of the practical working of faith, are *deluded* when they profess to have experienced the power of the Gospel over

the heart. Many feelings are regarded as belonging to religious experience which do not properly belong to it. Yet to conclude from these exceptions, that *the rule* which we have laid down is *a false one*, would be as great an error as to conclude that there is *no certainty in any science*, because some who knew not how to apply its principles, had made *some signal failures* in their attempts to obtain its legitimate results.

We make these preliminary remarks, because those who have *not felt*, and those who *do not wish to feel*, the power of religion, are disposed to *deny that any* have experienced it, inferring the delusion of all professors, from the manifest delusion of a few. And this is done by those who admit the truth of the Holy Scriptures, and acknowledge that the Bible contains a revelation from God. Against the opinions of such persons, we have urged the fact that these *Holy Scriptures declare*, that sinners have been converted, and have been assured of their conversion, and *authorize us to expect* like conversions now, and like experience of the power of grace. We therefore proceed to consider such experience.

And we repeat the remark, that the words of our text very aptly express the testimony which the Christian convert can give in regard to his experience. The convert to Christ *knows that he is a new man*, through the grace of God. This *knowledge*, this *spiritual sight*, is enough. The time when he *first received* the influence of divine grace, may not be known. And it is quite immaterial whether it is or not. Nor is it at all important whether he can remember and relate any circumstances which marked the progress of his conversion. These are as different as the constitutions of individuals. The power which first brought him into submission to the will of God through Christ Jesus, our Lord, may have been in the *earthquake*, or in the *mighty wind*, or in the *still, small voice*. Like Paul, he may have been subdued in the way of persecuting unbelief, by the sudden blaze of divine truth, poured upon his staggered mind. Or like Lydia, his *heart may have been opened* to attend to the things which were spoken by an apostle of Jesus. A *single text*, attracting the attention under peculiar circumstances, may induce a train of reflections on the goodness and long-suffering of God, that will lead to repentance. A *word fitly spoken*, may reveal

to the sinner offences that he has long covered from view, and open the flood-gates of sorrow, that saving faith alone can close. The comforts of faith may be reached by *slow* and painful steps. Or the convicted sinner may be suddenly plunged into the gulf of drowning remorse, from which he may be rescued after one piteous cry,—“Save, Lord, or I perish!” A bereavement, or some other affliction, may be the immediate forerunner of a sudden conversion. Or the web of sin which shuts out God from the heart, may have been broken and cast off in early life, under circumstances not remembered. Hence it is wrong to judge all conversions by *any fixed rule*, except that which requires of all alike, (what all who are truly converted *must* and *can* give,) the testimony of *grateful obedience to Christ*. The true believer in Christ knows that he was *born blind* in heart, and that through the grace of God, he now sees. If he *knows this*, and gives evidence that he sees, it is enough. In vain does the scoffer attempt to weaken his faith by ridicule; or the Pharisee to overawe him by dogmatism. In vain is he told that he has been deluded by false teachers. He is safe while he has “the witness in himself,” confirmed by the Spirit of God, that he is renewed by the grace of God, that whereas he was blind, now he sees. Let us now consider *what* the converted sinner sees. He sees his *own vileness*—the *mercy* and *love of Christ*—the *value of redemption*, and the *excellency of piety*.

1. His *own vileness*.

The Gospel proclaims the universal corruption of mankind. Through his word therein made known, God “commands all men, every where, to repent.” But if all must repent, all have something to repent of—all are guilty of sin, and need reformation. When the Scriptures, however, insist on man’s depravity, they do not mean to charge him with an entire want of goodness with respect to his fellow-man. There may be much sound morality in the conduct of some who have never meekly received the word of God through Christ Jesus. But this *outward show of moral purity*, if tried by the Scripture rule, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour *as thyself*,” would be found a *very imperfect* fulfilment of duty, even with reference to man. How much more deficient would all men be found, when tried by his word in relation to their *duty to him*! That word *giveth light*

to the mind, and shows not *only great imperfections* in a character before supposed to be faultless; but such a *want of true devotion* to the will of God, as must make the delinquent obnoxious to condemnation in the sight of infinite holiness. Now, a man may be a good citizen, honest and upright in his dealings—he may be a warm philanthropist, giving his time and his money to the cause of social improvement; he may be a kind parent, or a dutiful child—exemplary in all the social relations of life—loathing all gross vice, and striving to root it out of the community in which he lives—he may be all this, and more than this; he may even be constant and reverential in the duties of *public worship*, and with an habitual contemplation of all the common manifestations of divine power, he may “look through Nature up to Nature’s God,” and yet he may be very far from being a subject of Christ’s kingdom—an heir of eternal life through the only Saviour. He may deem himself as good as he need be, or so good that, on the whole, he will be found worthy of reward in the day of final judgment. Or he may be all that we have supposed, and yet never think of God as A HOLY BEING, demanding holiness in his creatures, or as a strict judge, rewarding men according to his own estimation of their works. And even if he does believe in Christ’s authority to prescribe the rule of life, and to declare the rule of judgment, he may resolve that rule into what he has himself established as the line of duty—that we are required to do as well as we can, and if we do so, God will forgive all our sins in compassion for our infirmity. How far are all such persons from the kingdom of God! How miserably will they fail of attaining that everlasting peace which is the desire of all who reflect upon the future state of the soul!

The converted sinner, he who has been brought through the saving truth of God’s word to a knowledge of himself,—of God, sees himself in a different light. He sees the infinite holiness of God, and the utter impossibility of standing pure in the sight of such holiness, and like the outcast leper, with his hand on his lips, he cries, “Unclean.” “Lord, I am vile; I have sinned against thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son!” He sees that he has been following the devices of his own heart, instead of walking constantly in the knowledge and the fear of God—that he has set the love of the world, and its approbation,

or the flattery of his own self-esteem, above the love of God, and of his testimonies; and in deep contrition for his unworthiness, he confesses his sin, and shows sincere repentance by his obedience to the law of Christ. And his repentance for past sins, as well as his zeal for the cause of holiness, is quickened by his contemplation of the mercy and love of his Saviour. For he sees—Secondly:—

2. His *mercy* and *love*, the preciousness of that blood-shedding, by which he is reconciled to his heavenly Father, and has become a son of God by adoption.

He who, though living in a land where “the true light shineth,” had been spiritually blind, now sees not only himself, but his God, in a new character—himself a sinner, convicted and condemned—unable to atone for his transgressions; and God, a Saviour, full of long-suffering and mercy—seeking by wonderful means, to turn him from the way of sin to the path of holiness and peace. And viewing these two things together, his own vileness and rebellion, and God’s forbearance and tender mercy, his repentance is the more lively, the more sensible he is of the free grace and unbounded goodness of his Saviour. And he will realize this the more fully, the more sensible he is of his sinfulness. Before he was cured of his spiritual blindness, being unable to see this sinfulness, and the consequent misery to which he was destined, he could have no just sense of God’s mercy. Not seeing his peril, he could not see the worth of deliverance. They only can know the love of God as displayed in redemption through Christ Jesus, who know how much his holiness has been offended by their sins. None but those who see and fear the raging billows of eternal wrath, can realize the mercy of the Saviour, who is ever walking in the midst of them. He whose eyes are opened to discern his own sinfulness, wonders that God should have mercy on him at all. How much more does he wonder when he sees God’s mode of showing it. He can now say, “Whereas, I was wont to regard the blood of the covenant as an unholy thing, and the declaration of God’s inestimable love in the sacrifice of his Son as a fiction of enthusiasm, or heard as if I heard it not; now I adore the mystery of redemption, and feel my heart swell with gratitude for that mercy which passes my comprehension, and my power of expression.” Such will be

the kind of experience of which every convert will be sensible, though its degree may depend much upon individual temperament. Joy may be the predominant feeling in some who have been convicted of sin, and their apprehension of wo may soon give place to the hope of salvation. In them, the feeling of self-loathing may soon be absorbed in the sense of God's sure mercy. The cloud which lowers with wrathful threatenings upon the world of sin, is seen by all who know the power of the Gospel; but some may be quicker than others to discern the bow of promise formed by the light of God's reconciled countenance.

Seeing clearly the evil and danger of sin, and the certain redemption which Christ has wrought for all who believe, the converted man rejoices (more or less, according to his natural temperament) in the contemplation of that redemption. So long as he delights in the law of God, he has a feeling of acceptance by his once offended God. And this joyful feeling has reference not only to the peril which he has escaped, but likewise to the eternal reward set before him. He sees at one view, the terrors of the condemnation which awaits the unforgiven sinner, and the blessedness of that "incorruptible inheritance" which is promised to the redeemed. He can say with St. Peter, "I am partaker of the glory that shall be revealed." And that glory, of which he has a foretaste, and which is in itself so precious, appears the more so from its contrast with that condition of misery which is the only alternative proposed to the sinner. The experience of the value of redemption consists of mixed feelings. The Christian sees the evil of sin and its penalty—from which he has escaped, by the grace of God—and the prospect of eternal blessedness opened to him by the same grace. And with these subjects of contemplation, he associates the thought of the grace itself, and its mode of manifestation. If he has ever been duly sensible of God's mercy in Christ Jesus, he can never entirely lose sight of it. Whatever progress he may make in Christian experience, however "he may follow on to know the Lord," he will always remember with grateful affection, "the grace wherein he stands,"—the precious blood-shedding by which he was redeemed. We may now perceive the truth of our last general position, that he whose eyes God hath opened by means of the Gospel, sees the excellency of piety. He sees this, not

only as it is a proof of his sure title to the redemption through Christ Jesus, (for true faith worketh by love, and bringeth forth righteousness,) but likewise as an expression of love for his Saviour, and an earnest of the life to come. The true Christian, then, has experience of the love of God shed abroad in his heart, moving him to a cheerful devotion to his Saviour. He feels himself drawn towards God by motives to which he was once a stranger. And he is sensible of a delight in the law of God, which (when he considers the weakness of the flesh) is regarded as a foretaste of heavenly joy, distinct enough to encourage his earnest striving to attain it.

Before he was converted, the believer in Christianity may have heard with seriousness and reverence, the word of truth, declaring the blessedness of faith; but he had no experience, and perhaps no conception of it. The inspired men of the ages before Christ, may have told him, (and he believed what they spake by the voice of inspiration,) that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," and that all the ways of wisdom are "ways of pleasantness and peace." But he knew nothing of this by experience. He may have often heard from the New Testament—which he regarded as the record of a divine revelation—that "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God," and that "the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy and peace;" or that "the kingdom of God is in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." He may have believed that the Scripture is true, which declares these things, but he had no experience of them. Now, since "Christ has been formed in him," since he has become a new man by the transforming influence of the Spirit, teaching him the corruption of his heart, and the cleansing power of the blood of Christ, he knows by experience the truth of these sayings. Thus, in regard to the enormity of sin and its fatal tendency, the guilt and condemnation of man, and his redemption by the sacrifice of Christ the righteous—the value of this redemption, and the excellency of piety—in regard to all this, the truly converted man can say at all times, (however he may be exposed to the cavils of the world,) "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see."

My hearers, can you adopt the language of the text as a proper expression of your own feelings, and your own experience of

the enlightening power of the Gospel? Do you know this “one thing,” that whereas you were blind to your sins, and to the condemnation which awaited you—to the wonderful love of a bleeding Saviour, and to the precious fruits of his blood-shedding in this life, and in the life to come—you now see all this? Can you truly say that the eyes of your mind have been opened by the Lord Jesus Christ, to discern the misery of your sinful condition, and the glory which shall be revealed to the heirs of salvation. Have you felt the burden of sin, and in answer to the gracious invitation of Christ to the weary and heavy-laden, have you gone to him for rest? Examine yourselves, my hearers, whether ye be in the faith. See if ye have the witness in yourselves, that ye are redeemed by the blood of Christ. Do you now see the evil of sin—its hatefulness in the sight of God, and the infinite mercy which has provided an infinite sacrifice for its expiation? Can you say, “We love God because he first loved us?” and “Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit?” Do you discern the beauty of holiness, and have you the comfort of the Holy Ghost, walking in the fear of God, and striving to keep his commandments? If you do thus know Christ experimentally, then, though you may know little of theology as a science, and little of the evidences of Christianity, you may meet all adversaries with the confident declaration of the text.

But, my hearers, if you cannot do this; if, like the Pharisees, you say, “We see,” and remain in sin, you need a spiritual physician to deliver you from eternal darkness. Apply to the Lord Jesus, who is such a physician, and as the blind man obeyed the command, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam,” and came back seeing—so at his command, go ye, wash in the pool of Calvary, in the blood of atonement, which flows by the foot of the cross, and come back cleansed through faith, renewed unto eternal life.

May God guide the blind unto him, who alone can give sight. May you all receive the blessed manifestations of his mercy, in a rich experience here on earth, of that peace which will be without measure or end, in his heavenly kingdom.

SERMON III.

“How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?”—HEBREWS ii. 3.

THE argument of the sacred writer, which has for its conclusion the emphatic question in our text, enforces the peculiar guilt of those who neglect the salvation offered through Christ, on the ground of its surpassing greatness. If, then, we can show its greatness, the consequent peril of neglecting it will be plainly seen. “The greater the light given, the greater the condemnation for wilful blindness,” is a principle strongly asserted in holy scripture. Clear revelation of truth—powerful moral suasion, the employment of instrumentality of the highest order of excellence, leave the *unmoved subject* of these appeals *without excuse*. The plan of redemption through Jesus Christ sets forth a machinery of moral power, so majestic, as almost to forbid an attempt to grasp it. May the all-wise Author of it help us to show some plain marks of that excellence which challenges admiration! We may make some approach to a full view of the excellence of Christian salvation, if we consider it as employing *great agents*, as exhibiting proofs of *great designs*, and as accomplishing *great results*.

1. As employing great agents.—God has never left himself without witness to men in any age, but has revealed himself in signs and wonders and mighty works; the mediators whom he has designated having given unquestionable proofs of their divine commission. At sundry times and in divers manners he spake unto his people by the *Prophets*; and the authenticity of the revelation, in whatever form it was made, was always proved “by signs following.” The salvation of the Jews from Egyptian bondage, and their guidance through the wilderness, under the command of Moses, was attended with sublime exhibitions of

the overruling and directing power of the Almighty Jehovah. As a *prophet* and a worker of miracles there was "none like Moses," until the time of the Gospel dispensation. *Then*, it pleased God to speak peace unto the world through his *Son*—to give a higher manifestation of his glory than the world had ever beheld. The time had come when the brightness of his glory, which had appeared in glimpses from age to age, should burst upon the astonished world in "the express image of his person," "a marvellous light in which all nations should rejoice." The world that had long lain in gross darkness, saw that light in the only Son of God, who, "upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high." This incarnation of the Godhead, who, in compassion for man's weakness and in mercy to man's sinfulness and misery, took upon him man's nature, and suffered in the flesh for sin, was the mighty agent in that salvation whose greatness we now contemplate. We can conceive of the dignity of the Christian mission, when we view the agent simply as God. But we strive in vain to measure the greatness of the humiliation which that mission demanded. For we never can know how great was the descent from Deity to humanity, until we can know by experiment what it is to ascend to God. Nor can we now understand that union by which the Godhead of Christ gave such dignity to the flesh in which it dwelt, that the sufferings of Christ became a sufficient expiation for the sins of the whole world. As disciples of Christ, "we walk by faith and not by sight." There is much in the revelation which has been made through him, which we cannot fully understand, but which we receive implicitly, because it is a divine revelation. The facts of that revelation we believe because its authority is undoubted, although we may not be able to explain them. Revelation is adapted to our faculties. We must not expect them to rise to a level with the subjects of that revelation.

The difficulties of the Bible are in the subjects of which it treats. The language in which they are stated is plain and simple enough, so that no excuse can be found for rejecting the facts which we are required to believe. And this is all that we can reasonably ask. The Scripture speaks plainly when it says "the Word which was God, became flesh," and in the person of Jesus Christ suffered

death upon the cross for our redemption. How God could be thus manifest in the flesh, the Scripture does not tell us. It is one of those revealed truths which we must receive into our creed, because declared by authority proved to be divine, wondering while we believe, and adoring while we wonder. Nor is this mystery, stupendous as it is, much more bewildering than the fact that man was redeemed by a mediator. They are both truths so sublime that the mind is overpowered by them, and is compelled to bow down under the accredited revelation of them in acknowledgment of the declared principle, that whosoever would enjoy the blessings of Christ's kingdom, "must receive it as a little child."

Surpassingly great, then, is that salvation which employed the direct personal agency of the God of heaven in the execution of the plan. And if it was deemed necessary that such a display of power, love, and condescension should be made, nay, if it was deemed expedient by Him who knoweth all things, to give man such a proof of his love, it is surely the greatest guilt and irreverence to neglect so great salvation.

When after a long course of resistance to his authority in the person of his prophets, God at length sent his Son into the world, he had reason to say, as in the parable of our Lord, "Surely, they will reverence my Son!" Much more reason has he to demand our reverence, since he has revealed to us the Divinity of that Son. Let all to whom the Gospel has been preached, strive to realize the exceeding greatness of the salvation which it sets forth, and embrace it as a boon, which it would be the greatest folly to refuse, and the greatest guilt to neglect and despise.

"Stand in awe and sin not," child of Adam, taught of the Lord.

"Thy God's thy Saviour—glorious word:
Oh hear, believe, and bless the Lord."

God's personal agency is likewise employed in another part of the scheme of salvation, in the conversion and sanctification of the soul. The distinct personality of the Holy Ghost as one of the manifestations of the triune God, is clearly taught in the Christian Scriptures. And he is represented in the most striking manner, by a description of his office. His proper work is, to send conviction of sin to the heart of the sinner—to disclose the disease which threatens to destroy him, and direct him to the great Physician to give power

to all the truths preached by Christ and his ministers, to accompany all the ministrations of the word of God, and to impart effectual grace to the ordinances of Christ. Whoever, therefore, resists his strivings with the soul, sets at naught his counsel and mocks at his rebuke, is guilty of a direct opposition to the agency of God himself, in the work of conversion from sin to holiness. How wonderfully is the high and mighty God brought down to our finite capacity by this doctrine of the Spirit's personal influence! And how much is the greatness of salvation enhanced by it!

The sublime truth, that the same quickening Spirit which, brooding over the face of the earth, brought order and beauty out of deformity and desolation, and formed it for the dwelling-place of man, should brood continually over the moral waste which deforms and degrades the soul of man, stirring it into vital energy, and striving to mould it into purity and loveliness—this gives peculiar emphasis to the demand, “How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation.”

Now this influence, involving such peril to the soul of its opposer, has been resisted by those who refuse submission to the will of God, made known in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. No matter how confounded you may be, when you seek to fathom the mysterious work of this divine agent, impenitent hearer, you may be sure that you have been guilty of resisting it often and fatally perhaps, and your ignorance of the mode of operation will not excuse your obstinacy and indifference. There is not one sinful creature around whom the Gospel has thrown its radiant light, and sought in vain to win from the ways of godliness, who has not striven with a divine influence, and incurred a fearful condemnation.

So sure are we of this that we might safely appeal to all of you who still refuse obedience to Christ, and ask you to confess the many powerful workings of an awakened conscience which you have tried to subdue, and have at last successfully resisted. For we are sure that God will not allow any of his creatures to destroy themselves without a struggle. No, he does indeed permit many allurements to sin and consequent ruin to be spread in their way. But he leaves them not without means of defence and protection, that will fix upon them the deepest guilt, as well as misery, if they yield and are lost. We know that none can be found who have

not, in their career of sinful opposition to *moral suasion*, known what it is, to kick against the pricks of an active and goading conscience, which God has set to hedge up the path to eternal death. Deny it if you will, you who have had Gospel privileges, and have not improved them, but you have resisted influences which will be arrayed against you at the day of judgment with a peculiar condemning power. If you continue to strive against such influences, you must perish in your sins, for no higher power than that of the Holy Spirit can be brought to bear upon you. Hence you perceive how, in this point of view, the greatness of Christian salvation increases the peril of those who neglect it.

Let us look now at the great designs and great results of Christian salvation. And these we may consider in close connexion, under one head, the results being the accomplished designs. This vast and inexhaustible subject has already been opened to our view. In approaching it again more closely, the mind labours under a crowd of thoughts having reference to three important questions, namely, What *was* man? What *is* he? What *is* he to become? His past, present, and future state, are all involved in the consideration of this subject. To know what man was before he became subject to the dominion of Christ as a Saviour, we must look to revelation. There we may obtain a glimpse of his condition when he came from the hands of his Creator. God created man "in his own image," that is, intelligent, holy and immortal. All the joys which flow from communion with God—from devout contemplation of his works and cheerful obedience to his will, were the heritage of this fairest work of God. Disease and death could not invade the walks of Paradise. No sting of conscience disturbed man's peace, for no stain of guilt rested on his soul. But the smile of his Creator beamed upon him, and lightened his countenance. This was too much bliss to be endured by the prince of rebellious and fallen spirits. The devil tempted man to sin. Sin brought death and eternal condemnation. Sorrow and suffering became the inheritance of his offspring, and the curse of God rested on him. Was there no rescue, no reprieve? Behold the wisdom and goodness of God! A decree went forth from the counsels of the eternal Jehovah, that "the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." Then was declared that far-reaching redemption whose accomplished designs we now rejoice to contemplate.

In the fulness of time Christ came, according to prophecy, and took away the curse, making salvation possible to all who will receive it at his hands. By the two-fold teaching, then, of scripture and his own conscience man became what he is. In his present state, he is subject to death, in consequence of sin, corrupt in nature, and only capable of pleasing God through faith in Jesus. By this mediation, through the blood of atonement, they who have a lively faith in him are justified in the sight of God, or accounted righteous before him. What, then, is man to become through the power of faith unto salvation? Sanctified by the Holy Ghost, and made meet for that inheritance of glory which will be the reward of the faithful.

Having new life through Him who has conquered death, man, pardoned for Christ's sake, has the constant help of the Spirit, if he will cherish the Holy One, in his daily work of preparation for heaven; and that work of preparation, if rightly done, makes a heaven on earth, in so far as it serves to take from earth most of those ills which mar man's peace. How great is that salvation which opens the *gate of heaven* to an exiled race of intelligent beings, which takes off the attainder for treason against the Majesty of heaven, which bridges over the gulf that separated the sinful soul of man from the infinite holiness of his heavenly Father. It is great in extent and fulness, in power and efficiency. It reaches all and covers all. It accomplishes results which nothing but divine love could purpose, nothing but divine power could effect. Not more sublime was the display of almighty power and glory, when God the Creator said, "Let there be light, and there was light," than when God the Redeemer says, "I will, be thou clean!" and the soul of man is purged from its corruption, and again appears in the likeness of God.

To those who have not accepted this great salvation, we appeal in the solemn language of the Apostle to the Hebrews,—“He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God.” Behold the three witnesses testifying against the despisers of the covenant of grace!—*God the Father* sending his beloved Son to be our brother in the flesh, our propitiation, our pattern, and our eternal advocate.—*God the Son*, self-doomed to the humiliation and agony of the cross, for the re-

demption of rebellious children of bondage.—*God the Holy Spirit*, visiting the hearts of sinners with his quickening power, leading by his gentle suasion, and besetting human waywardness with his stern rebuke. What a triple witness is here against all who, living in the midst of Gospel ministrations, cleave to their sins and their follies, and reject the word of eternal life. To such persons we would give a word of kind admonition. Reflect upon the peril of your condition. Consider the earnestness of the appeals which have been made to you—the vastness of the means of salvation offered, and the depth of the love which seeks to save you. The greatness of salvation shows the greatness of your sinfulness, which needs expiation, as well as the depth of your guilt, in rejecting the offered expiation. Strive to grasp the truth. Look well to the law which condemns, and then turn to the precious promises of justification and peace. See the whole scheme of wonderful love which God has revealed. See it in its fulness. Bring it home to your hearts, as the Spirit presses it upon you.

Turn not away in doubt, because the work of grace is mysterious. Sin, too, is a mystery, and yet you know that you have sin, and cannot blot it out. Turn not away with indifference, for eternal life or death hangs on the issue of the Gospel's appeal to you. Cast not away in scorn that which many of your fellow men have found to be the power of God unto salvation, and which angels desire to look into, lest you be doomed to call in vain forever, for that peace which is now freely offered. To be cast out from God's presence forever is a terrible doom. Why should any choose to risk it? Brethren, we love not to look at the threatenings of God's law. No, rather would we bow beneath the mercy seat, and catching thence the words of love and compassion, utter them with earnest entreaty in the words of the Apostle: "We beseech you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." We pray you to look to the welfare of your souls, to consider how God has wrought for your salvation, and with the fulness of his love and mercy before you, propose to yourselves the solemn question, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" Ask your own souls, and let the answer be written in the book of God's remembrance, as an earnest of your future participation of the precious benefits of Christ's atoning sacrifice and merciful intercession.

SERMON IV.

“Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”—GALATIANS vi. 7, 8.

HE must be very perverse, and resolved at all hazard to harden his heart against the influence of divine truth, who will not yield assent to such doctrines as bear the stamp of Nature’s seal. To any reasonable man, therefore, it should be a sufficient voucher of the claims of any dogma professing to have a divine sanction, that it agrees well with the testimony of uniform experience.

Now, we find the moral, as well as the physical constitution of things so ordered by the Creator, that his intelligent creatures reap just what they sow. In husbandry it is an obvious truth, all men know, and act upon this knowledge, that if they sow corn in their fields, they will reap corn. They would be very much surprised at any contradiction of their experience in a matter of such common observation.

Now this is a *general law of nature*, which is the manifestation of God’s providence in the outward creation, in which he always works by general laws. He has so provided, that the seed being sown in the earth, the *blade* soon springs up, the ear is then formed, and the full grain is at length brought forth.

In effecting this result, no interposition of divine power is visible. The successive processes and results are natural, uniform and necessary.

If, now, we look closely at human life, we shall perceive that the moral constitution of man presents a similar aspect, so similar as to justify us in ascribing to the *same all-wise Providence*, the uniform succession of cause and effect which it displays. We shall see *good producing good*, and *evil producing evil*, each yield-

ing fruit after its kind; not, indeed, with such perfect uniformity as in the case of reproduction of seed from seed, but generally.

God appears to have ordained, for the *moral government* of the world, for instance, that the *abuse* of the good things bestowed upon man, shall bring upon him suffering and often disgrace and misery. How many proofs of this does the world afford! How often do we see *old age paying for the follies* of youth, in *bodily pains*, or *mental anguish* under the sense of guilt. The history of the world's experience tells us plainly that if a man indulges evil passions in his youth, and exhausts the strength of his constitution by frequent excesses, he will reap the fruit of his own planting in a shattered frame, trembling nerves or an imbecile mind.

If prodigality and recklessness mark the early character, the condition of old age will commonly be that of want and poverty; and, on the contrary, if honest diligence and prudent economy be exhibited in youth, a comfortable and respectable old age will generally follow.

These are God's appointments under his system of moral government. There is sufficient uniformity to mark the results as a system, while there are exceptions enough to show that a future state of retribution may reasonably be expected. They show the *natural tendency* of good to produce good, and of evil to produce evil. And this is the principle that we wish to illustrate.

We have seen, then, that it is as true in *morals*, as in husbandry, that whatsoever a man sows, he will surely reap. And we might expect to find it equally true in religion. So that we are quite prepared for the application of this principle to spiritual matters, made by the apostle in the latter verse of our text. If reasonable beings, we should be ready to admit the truth of the language, though it were not that of divine inspiration. But having the sanction of the Holy Spirit, they are words of solemn import, which should be deeply pondered by every one to whom the gospel must be "a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death."

"He that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

Let us test this principle, so positively asserted by the Apostle, and see the closeness of its application. View it first, in refer-

ence to this life as a state of probation; and secondly, in regard to a future life of reward and punishment.

It is a fixed principle in the constitution of man that the constant use of any faculty increases both the facility of using and the tendency to use it. This is as true in morals as in physics. The more frequently any action, whether good or bad, is performed, the more easily will a similar action at any time be done. Each act is therefore the seed of every future act, producing fruit after its kind.

Let us trace these natural results of actions, first, in the course of sin and worldliness; or what St. Paul calls, "sowing to the flesh."

On this head let it be observed, that conscience, (which is an inward check upon the evil propensities of our nature,) is weakened by every sinful act, and may be entirely stifled by a long course of resistance to its authority. If its admonitions be disregarded once, they will plead with far less power a second time. What was once regarded as evil, will cease to be so regarded, and hence sin will be more frequently committed. Thus by a habit of sinning, the heart becomes hardened in guilt, sin grows more and more reconcilable to the moral sense, and an abundant harvest of wickedness may confidently be expected.

Now the heart hardens itself all the while—there is no direct interposition of divine power in the case, any more than in the production of seed from seed. It is the natural result of evil indulgence. And when the scripture declares that God "hardens the heart" of a sinner, it is not to be understood to represent God as working evil, or as in the least degree interfering with the free agency of man. He only turns the wicked over to a reprobate mind. That is, he leaves the sinner to the natural consequences of his sinfulness. He withholds his hand from any interposition, and allows the evil propensity to bring forth the natural and necessary fruit of its free indulgence.

We would have you entertain clear views on this subject, my hearers; and therefore we are plain and positive. God must interpose his hand to **SAVE**. He need not do so to **DESTROY**. Evil is in the heart of man; and it will work evil continually. God did not put it there: and hence, if he permit it to bring forth its natural fruits, he is not to be held answerable for sin.

Therefore, all expressions in the holy Scriptures, which seem to encourage the belief, that God interposes specially to harden the sinner, must be interpreted in such a way as to leave man's free agency unimpaired. And this is the true interpretation—that man will grow worse and worse, if he resist the admonitions of conscience, which is the voice of God within him, saying to his tumultuous passions, "Peace, be still." If a man will sow to the flesh, he must of the flesh, reap corruption. Let every one take heed, therefore, how and what he sows, for in due season he will reap accordingly.

A reflection is here suggested which may not be very obvious, but which is vastly important. It relates to the danger of what are called small sins. You may count many little offences perfectly venial, and therefore as calling for neither great vigilance nor deep repentance. But you greatly err. Consider, that any sin, however small it may appear, inasmuch as it offends, yet serves to stifle the conscience, opens the way for many larger sins, which, to your dismay and your ruin, will, by and by, come in like an overrunning flood.

By sinning a little, you will increase the difficulty of resisting temptation; and, hence, your first offence should rather be deemed the least pardonable of all, since it was committed while your conscience was yet tender, and was also the cause, so to speak, of all your subsequent sins; for what you then sowed sparingly, you afterwards reaped abundantly.

Take heed, therefore, how you offend your conscience in the least degree; for you know not what a vast amount of wickedness and misery may result from what you may regard as a single and inconsiderable sin. Resist the beginnings of evil, if you would be saved from complete subjection to the power of the enemy that lies in wait for your souls.

The principle of the text is equally true when applied to those who sow to the Spirit. These will grow in grace "continually, and will reap of the Spirit life everlasting." In the case of these, however, we cannot see the working of the principle so clearly; for God does not leave them to themselves.

It is by his grace that sinful men are, and must be, renovated. But when the principle of holiness is once implanted, every exercise of that principle gives it new strength—the way of right-

eousness becomes more and more readily attainable—the power of Satan is weakened by every successful resistance of his tempting attacks, and all the rich fruits of the Spirit in time appear, the abundant harvest of holy things. Who does not know how much easier it is to resist the second time, any temptation which has been once successfully resisted? how easy self-denial becomes by the force of habit—and how much the frequency of doing good increases the power, as well as the desire to do it? With reference to any work that men may undertake, it is true that the more they do, the more they may do. In all labours, bodily and mental, in works of charity, in every exercise of virtuous principle, practice makes every thing easy, and hence induces the greater frequency of doing the same. Thus good produces good, as seed re-produces seed.

“He who soweth to the Spirit, shall reap of the Spirit.” This is a doctrine, the truth of which can be attested by the experience of many. The pious Christian of every age has had “the witness in himself” of the growth of that grace which he has been eager to cherish. For the dew of divine love falls heavily upon all who seek to water the root of holiness that God has planted in their souls. Each endeavour to promote their own salvation, is blessed with new assurances of continual help from him who is able to keep them from falling, and will finish the work which he has begun in them, to his own praise and glory. Every earnest effort to mount up to heaven on the wings of prayer, is sustained by the Spirit which “helpeth our infirmities, and maketh intercession for us.” Thus they who “wait on the Lord continually,” enjoy the fulfilment of the Scripture promise, for they “renew their strength as the eagles.” The soul is drawn nearer and nearer unto God by each act of supplication—that which was at first a task, a duty reluctantly performed, soon becomes a pleasing exercise, and at last is necessary to the Christian’s daily comfort. And, so with regard to all the devotional exercises—the more frequently they are engaged in with holy fervour, the more delight they afford, and the greater is the desire to engage in them. The constant communion with God, which is ultimately established, induces “that peace of mind which passes the understanding” of the careless worshipper, and begets that habit of religious meditation, which is literally “walking with God.”

Thus the pious Christian is constantly proving the truth of the assurance that whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. He reaps of the things of the Spirit throughout his life on earth, and will finally attain, as a full harvest, the life everlasting, which is promised through Christ Jesus our Lord. Can we not safely and confidently appeal to the experience of some of you, my hearers, for testimony to the truth of what we say? Yes! Well do we know that the grace of God has given you, who have made a good profession of the Christian faith, the witness in yourselves of the faithfulness of pious purposes. You know the love of God in Christ Jesus—you have proved his faithfulness to redeem his pledges. And having tasted that the Lord is gracious, you may trust him for the future finishing of the good work which he has begun in you, to his own praise and glory. Follow on to know the Lord—being assured by the experience already gained, of final triumph, if you persevere unto the end. God grant that we may meet in bliss, after judgment, to sing the praise of Him who loved us, and gave himself for us. We have shown you, my hearers, in few words, the application of our text to this life of probation, and have seen that whatsoever a man soweth, whether good or evil, that shall he also reap. Equally true is it in regard to the life to come. And it is a truth so solemn and awful, that it demands the serious attention of every rational being, and especially of those to whom the Gospel of Jesus Christ is continually preached. This Gospel proclaims a way of salvation which Jesus has opened by the shedding of his blood. The way is so plain, and the making of it cost so much, that they who refuse to enter it, evince the most stubborn ingratitude and obstinacy, or the most guilty recklessness and indifference. Now it would seem to be a just retribution to condemn to everlasting misery, those who wilfully reject an eternal life of joy and peace. Even if this were not the alternative presented to mankind by Him who has wrought redemption for all who believe, we see not how any one who admits the right of an Almighty Creator to punish his rebellious creatures, could object to such a punishment. Yet many do object to it on the ground of God's mercy and love, alleging that it would be inconsistent with these his glorious attributes. But the objection is a very weak one—for the same authority which declares that eternal punishment awaits all who reject the Saviour,

and so die in their sins, also assures us that God has exercised his love to the utmost for the salvation of sinners, and offered them the abundance of his mercy, through the redemption wrought by his beloved Son. How, indeed, could God give any greater proof of his love for the sinner whom he condemns, than he has given in the very Gospel, for rejecting which the condemnation is pronounced? The wisdom of man cannot tell—the imagination cannot conceive.

But all God's attributes are equally perfect and glorious; and if we consider his justice and holiness, as well as his love and mercy, we must admit that it would be perfectly consistent with the character of God, to punish eternally, those who refused obedience to the Gospel, even if such punishment had not been annexed as the penalty of unbelief. But the alternative is plainly stated in the Gospel. The sinner is assured that if he will accept the salvation offered to him, he will be happy forever; but that if he rejects it, he will be forever miserable. Now, we may be able to show, that man will punish himself throughout eternity, just as he hardens himself in this life; and that in suffering the eternal retribution of wickedness, he is only reaping that which he has sown. If this can be shown, it will preclude any objection to future punishment as implying the special interposition of a vindictive God. For, it will be seen, that no such interposition is needed, since the punishment which follows a life of sin, must be regarded as only the natural and necessary consequence of such a life. The wicked will enter another world with the same passions which here kept them in a state of rebellion against God, and strife with their fellow-men—and these will continue to rage with increased violence. What a cage of unclean birds—a den of crawling vipers, is the prison of lost spirits! What ravenous lust, seeking to devour all things—what raging hate!—what revenge, thirsting for blood, reign there! What pride, goaded to madness, and scorning submission to the will of God! What bitter envy, looking with malignant glare upon the scene of bliss which the redeemed enjoy! What fell remorse, gnawing the soul that has spurned the offer of such bliss, and steeped itself in endless woe! Oh! you might see in this picture, surveyed and analyzed minutely, the terrible harvest which they who sow wickedness, will reap in another world! If envy, and hate, and

revenge have raged in the heart on earth, they will rage more fearfully in hell. If pride has rejected the Saviour, and refused to submit to the will of God in this life, it will rankle in the soul in the state of departed spirits. And as there can be no place for repentance after death, remorse will be an eternal scourge to all who shall be condemned.

If men will nurse the evil passions all their days in the flesh, they must reap the fruits of their folly and wickedness throughout eternity. So the wicked do punish themselves; for they reap in another world what they have sown in this. They cherish those feelings of hostility to God, of aversion to Christ, and to the holiness which he imparts, which, in a world of purity, where Christ's righteousness is the crown of glory, must necessarily make them miserable. We warn those therefore, who resist and oppose the claims of Christ, of the fearful consequences of their obstinacy and opposition. It is a dreadful thing to fight against God, who has made a sure provision for the salvation of his humble and penitent creatures. Christ is the only Saviour. Vain delusion to build a hope of divine favour on any other foundation than faith in the appointed Redeemer! Fatal blindness if it lasts till death! For the time will come when the delusion will be taken away.

At the final judgment before Christ's awful tribunal, they who have not been his disciples here on earth, will know that they have cast away the only appointed means of salvation. The Lord will reveal himself in judgment to those who would not receive his revelation of mercy. They who are now wilfully blind, will then be compelled to see—see themselves as condemned sinners—and the Lord, the rejected Saviour, now the avenging Judge. Here on earth, alas, men do not know themselves. Their consciences are blinded and stifled, and their own wickedness in God's sight is often shut out from their view. But it will not be so in another world. There the soul will be quickened in its perception of evil, as well as of good, and the conscience, roused into new vigour, will convict the most moral persons of wickedness in the sight of God. The holiness of God will seem so pure, and the offence of transgression will appear so deep and dark, when viewed in the light of such holiness, that the soul of the unre-

deemed man will abhor itself forever, although in this life it may have slept quietly, lulled by the whisperings of self-righteousness. The soul conscious of its identity, will be compelled to review the history of its probation, (when God's Spirit was striving with it for good,) while it surveys the blessedness of those who have the witness of that Spirit, that they are the accepted of God. Imagine its torture under the eternal conflict of emotions excited by this two-fold view. The keen perception of the joys which might have been its portion, and the vivid recollection of abused privileges and despised mercies, the alternate image of the bleeding, dying Saviour, stretching out his hands in pity and supplication to the sinner that he would save, and of the same enthroned and triumphant Saviour, receiving the homage of the heavenly hosts and condemning the sinner that has despised and rejected him. Oh! these are circumstances of judgment that must wring the soul with anguish. If you would avoid such self-wrought retribution, be careful, while you live, to "sow to the Spirit, that you may of the Spirit reap life everlasting." For the text may be applied with equal truth and adaptedness to the state of the redeemed, who will be crowned with glory in heaven. They who embrace the salvation which Christ has purchased and offered in the Gospel, who receive and cherish the precious influences of the Holy Spirit, grow in grace from day to day, and become more and more fitted for the state of holy rest which is reserved for the faithful. The more closely they walk with God, the more resolutely they fight against sin, the world, and the devil,—the more diligently they examine their hearts, and root out from them all pride, selfishness, and lust,—the more steadily they labour in the service of their Lord, so much the more are they qualified for the enjoyment of the bliss of heaven. They breathe the element in which they will spend eternity, that of holiness and purity. If, indeed, the Christian enjoys the services of the sanctuary on earth, he will be ready to enter upon the service of that temple not made with hands, "eternal in the heavens." If he loves to contemplate the righteousness of his Saviour, and in view of his own depravity and unworthiness to "make mention of that righteousness alone," he will be prepared to join in the anthem of ceaseless praise to "Him who hath washed us in His blood," the spotless Lamb of God. Thus by his whole life the pious Christian prepares himself for

the eternal world; and when he is called to enter that world and to share in its glorious rewards, he presents a living, moving illustration of the truth of that saying of the Apostle, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap, for he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." What a harvest is this for a soul that was once shut out from God's favour, through the curse of disobedience!—and who would not be a reaper in that field whose fruits are so abundant and satisfying. Divine husbandry! Glorious gathering!! Were there no joy in sowing to the Spirit—were there no encouragement but a bare hope of final recompense for patient toil, yet the cry of angels to the redeemed in heaven, "Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe," would wake the soul to joys that are cheaply bought with a life of trial and sorrow.

But on the Christian's reward we cannot dwell. We have shown you the product of good and of evil seed,—the sure results of holy and of ungodly living. With these truths before you, my hearers, what should be your conduct? The voice of experience and observation, the deductions of reason in regard to a future state of reward and punishment, and the sure, sublime, startling revelations of God's word—all declare that as you here sow, you will hereafter reap. If you live "after the flesh," cherishing its corrupt affections and lusts, you will incur a fearful retribution. But if you live "after the Spirit," you have the sure promise of everlasting life. Hesitate not, we pray you, to give unto God, through Christ Jesus, the whole seed-time of your existence, and obtain of Him an abundant harvest of eternal joy and felicity.

SERMON V.

“Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.”—ACTS xxiv. 25.

THUS spake the guilty Felix, when he trembled at the reproof of his own conscience roused by the searching discourse of St. Paul upon “righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come.” He had summoned the Apostle to appear before him, and give him some knowledge of the Christian religion. The Apostle, knowing the character of his hearer, who was notorious for his injustice and incontinence, selected such topics as were calculated to produce the greatest impression upon his mind, with a view to his conviction. And so powerfully did he portray the true character of Felix, in the general consideration of those topics, so vividly did he present to the culprit, in the retrospect of his sinful life, the picture of his own deformity, that he trembled at the bare thought of that judgment to come, of which Paul spake, and unto which, if Paul spake truly, even he must be brought. His conscience charged him with many and gross violations of that sense of right which God had implanted in his heart, and the apprehension of a just retribution was immediately excited. Surprise probably increased the effect of Paul’s preaching, for Felix had no idea of such a direct and practical enforcement of the principles of the religion of which he wished some particular account. He had heard something of it, and was curious to know more of it. He therefore desired Paul to give him a full statement of its peculiar doctrines—to unfold its mysteries, and develop its philosophy; in which, as an enlightened heathen, he felt an interest common to the inquirers of that age. And for the sake of his wife Drusilla, who was a Jewess, he may have sought a more complete exposition of that system which, he had been informed, was founded upon the religion of the Jews. The Apostle probably unfolded the whole

system, not only to gratify the curiosity of his hearers, but to be able also more effectually to impress them with the solemn truths of a practical character, which were involved in the truth of the system itself. As he reviewed the Jewish history, and the testimony of the prophets, showing how clearly Christ was promised and foretold, and then matched with this the acknowledged history of Jesus—his death upon the cross, and the fact of his resurrection, which had been abundantly proved, Felix probably became very intent to hear him. The subject grew more and more interesting, till, at last, he became so absorbed in it, as involuntarily to admit the truth of what he heard. And when, at this crisis, Paul preached strongly upon those principles of Christian morality in which he felt entirely deficient, he shuddered at the thought of the condemnation which awaited him. It was a momentary conviction, which, being dismissed from his mind, instead of being cherished with a view to amendment, only showed the gross corruption of his character. His conscience was an unpleasant monitor when roused by such a preacher. And, therefore, he dismisses the preacher, that he may quietly slumber in sin. “Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.” But this convenient season for his soul’s salvation never came. This day of grace, when God visited him with such compunctions for sin, was suffered to pass unimproved. And henceforward there was nothing left for him but “a fearful looking for” that judgment, which had caused him to tremble in the presence of his prisoner. It was convenient to his inclination and his hope of worldly gain, however, to call for the Apostle often, during the two years that he continued in the government of the province. But he hoped that he should obtain money for Paul’s release, for he kept him in prison for two years, although he was convinced that Paul had done nothing worthy of death or of bonds. How little permanent impression did the preaching, under which he trembled for a moment, make upon his mind! How little did he reck of justice and righteousness, who could thus detain in prison an innocent man, with the hope of filling his coffers with the purchase of freedom! How blind to his own eternal interest was this corrupt ruler! Salvation through Christ Jesus was offered to him, and he was nigh unto it. The Spirit of God pressed the truth upon his heart,—his conscience was alarmed, and with a single bound

he might have escaped from the toils of sin. But he put off the day of repentance, saying, Not yet—leave me to myself—some other day I will consider this matter.

Many a soul, like that of Felix, has been lost through delay of repentance, through a neglect of those seasons of grace, when conviction of sin is strong and clear and moving. Delay is always dangerous in the matter of salvation, because life is so uncertain—and he that puts off till to-morrow, may put off forever. But whoever does so, when his heart is deeply impressed, when he is so much moved by the word of God, and the promptings of his own conscience, enlightened by that word, as to be “almost persuaded to be a Christian,” does what, in the very nature of things, may be regarded as shutting him out from salvation. For it may not be expected that an impression that has been once resisted, will ever again have equal, much less greater power. The voice of conscience, oft unheeded, ceases to be heard, and all warnings fall powerless on the ear. And many, who would condemn the conduct of Felix, may see in his case a true picture of their own. He had heard of Christ often before, but Christ had not till now been preached to him. His own personal liability to condemnation by that righteous Judge is now forcibly impressed upon his mind. If Paul speak the truth, he cannot endure that judgment at the bar of Christ, where all must appear. Yet instead of seeking at once that hope of salvation which cometh through Christ, he bargains with his conscience (which he cannot otherwise appease,) for a little more time, with the promise of future repentance at some more convenient season. And are there not many who do the like? They may not, like Felix, have called the preacher of the Gospel to them, to hear, for the first time, the truth as it is in Jesus. But they have come to the minister of Jesus—to the sanctuary where they expect to hear the Gospel preached. And though they have heard it oft, with respectful attention, it may have never but once touched their hearts and roused their consciences. Once only have they trembled at the thought of that judgment, for which they feel utterly unprepared, or melted at the picture of that mercy and goodness of God which they have so long abused. And yet, then, when grace was nigh unto them, with the offer of salvation, in spite of that trembling and melting of the heart, they have turned away from the truth,

with the delusive promise of future repentance—delusive, indeed, to their own souls—for it cannot deceive the preacher of God's word. He knows too well that, in most cases, the sinner, who was then just poised upon the dividing line between repentance which leads to salvation, and the state of indifference which leads to death, has fallen into fatal, hopeless apathy and unconcern.

Well does the Apostle say, "Now is the accepted time—now is the day of salvation." My hearers, the same holy Apostle who preached the Gospel to Felix, now preaches the same Gospel to us. To us he sets forth the duty of righteousness, in obedience to the command of the same Jesus, and in view of the terrors of the same judgment to come. In vain do we urge our purer character—our greater holiness than that of Felix. For even if we may not be liable to the charge of equally positive iniquity in the sight of man—we are, until redeemed by faith in the Son of God, our only Saviour, equally liable to condemnation by the righteous Judge of all men. But, except in regard to our natural sinfulness, in which respect all men are alike, we are more hateful in the sight of God, as sinners against his word freely preached to us, than the heathen, who have no opportunity to hear that word, or who, like Felix, hear it but once, though from the lips of an Apostle. They who "have the law, will be judged by the law." The more light we have received, the greater will be our condemnation, if we have not used that light to advantage. We shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ, charged not only with that sinfulness which demands of all men justification and sanctification, through the merits of Christ, and only by true faith in Him; but with the guilt of having lived in sin in spite of the warnings and promises of God's word, revealed through Christ.

The awful menace of God's judgment upon the impenitent is contained in the proverbs of Solomon, where true Wisdom or religion is represented as lifting up her voice of warning to those who have despised her. "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh
you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer;

they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me. For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices."

This truly and fearfully represents the effect of God's righteous judgment upon sinners, experienced in the pain of sin without a hopeful sense of its guilt in this world,—and in a hopeless sense of both the pain and the guilt of it, in the world to come. When trouble befalls the obstinate sinner, and all his resources of philosophy are exhausted, when the broken reed upon which he has leaned, and by which he yet seeks to support himself, falls beneath him, or pierces him through; when he looks in vain for that consolation which religion alone can afford him,—his futile attempts are strongly set forth in the expression which religion is supposed to utter—"I will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh." And in "the judgment of the great day," when all the nations of the earth shall be summoned to appear before the throne of the Son of God;—ordained to be the Judge as well as the Mediator, he who is Mediator only to the penitent believer, will indeed say to the impenitent who shall then look to him for mercy, "I have called unto you often and earnestly, but ye have refused: I have stretched out my hand, and ye have not regarded. Now therefore ye may call upon me, but I will not answer: ye shall eat of the fruit of your own way."

They who have despised, or heedlessly rejected the merciful offer of salvation through Christ Jesus, urged upon them, as it has been constantly during a long life of sin, must come before God at last, with shame and confusion of face, utterly without excuse and without hope, to receive eternal condemnation. All preparation for judgment must be made here on earth, during the short life which is allotted to us. "There is no place for repentance in the grave." Now if this be considered solemnly, as it should be, by every frail mortal, it will be deemed folly indeed, to put off the work of repentance from day to day, when there can be no assurance that another day will be granted for repentance unto salvation.

Let this be considered by all of you, my hearers, that you may diligently improve your day of grace. Take heed to all the warnings which you receive, cherish every conviction of sin which

rises in your heart. If the word of God, fitly spoken, reveal to yourself sinfulness that you before recked not of; if the providence of God bid you contemplate the near approach of the final judgment, with fear and trembling, having as yet no advocate at the awful tribunal of God, say not in your heart, to the messenger of mercy, "Go thy way for this time," but improve this, the present, and therefore convenient, perhaps the only, season of grace which will ever be afforded you.

Say not to conviction, "Go thy way for the present," lest you say to the divine Saviour, "Go thy way forever." For if conviction do not come again, so neither will repentance and faith, without which there can be no salvation. And you virtually do this, whenever, under any pretext, you neglect to improve religious impressions.

Consider then, perishing sinner, that you desire the Saviour to depart from you, when you heed not his warnings, or his friendly counsel. If he comes to you with a rebuke for sin, urging you to flee from the ways of wickedness; if he comes to you with the tender appeal of his dying love, begging you to accept the precious gift of salvation, whether he seek to move you by his inestimable sacrifice, or by the terrors of the law, from which you can escape only through that sacrifice—you may madly or heedlessly bid him depart, and he may go at your bidding. But it will not be always thus. There will be a day when he will come to judgment—when you may well cry out, for your soul's eternal peace, "Go thy way"—but he will not depart; for this is his convenient time, when he will not be put off. Unbidden, he will come, and unbidden he will stay, till he shall have sealed your doom forever. Then will they who have, like Felix, trembled at the thought of judgment, dreadfully fear and quake, in the presence of Him, who, once their pitying, merciful Saviour, has become their righteous and relentless Judge. Then will they who have rejected him as a Saviour, be compelled to receive him as a Judge, and to hear their just condemnation from him who, with a voice of long-suffering compassion, had in vain called unto them, to come unto him and be saved. If you have ever trembled at the picture of a judgment to come, and shuddered at your own conception of it, how will you meet its awful reality? If you have wept at the recollection of the long-suffering of God, and

of your repeated transgression of his law, and refusal of his mercy, during your life of probation, how will you endure the recital of these things by him, who, will convince you of the righteousness of that judgment which he will pronounce against you? The sudden conviction, which, startling for a moment, you have quelled with the vain promise of future repentance, will be exchanged for a deep, constant, and remorseful sense of sin, which will know no end. The fleeting remembrance of warnings oft despised, and of merciful offers of grace often rejected, which now prompts a sigh or a tear, will be exchanged for an abiding, agonizing recollection of the same, as the cause of your eternal condemnation. All the past will be spread before you, that you may see wherein you have offended, and may acknowledge the judgment of God to be just. The word of God, proclaiming the glorious Gospel of Christ, glowing with bright revelations of future joy and felicity to the true believer, filled with the promises of grace and peace to the penitent, and trumpet-tongued denunciations of wrath to the impenitent sinner,—this word oft preached to you, will be the swift witness against you, and the rule by which you will be judged. Standing by the side of the heathen, from whom you have withheld the Gospel that might have saved them, you will receive a severer doom than will be awarded to them, inasmuch as you have sinned against the greater light of truth. Better, then, that you had never heard of the grace of God which bringeth salvation, than, having heard, to have despised and rejected it. Better, then, that you had never been once born, if you have not been born again unto righteousness and eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Therefore, let not judgment come upon you unawares—let not death find you unprepared: for death will be the end of your time of preparation. And death may come to you in a day and an hour that ye think not of. Your life is but a vapour that soon vanishes away. It has a few “*to-days*,” but no “*to-morrow*,” to the wise and discreet mortal. It may truly have none to you. “To-day then, if ye will hear the voice” of the Saviour, is salvation come unto you. If you feel a sudden conviction to which your heart has hitherto been a stranger, that you are unfit to die, that you are guilty in the sight of God, and can have no hope of salvation but through the mercy of God,

be prompt to lay hold on that mercy which is offered through Christ Jesus our Lord. Say not to this Saviour, who by His Holy Spirit thus speaks to your soul, "Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season I will call for thee;" for the decree of the omnipotent and omniscient God may be uttered in the solemn warning, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee!"

SERMON VI.

“Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him.”—1ST EP. of JOHN, iii. 2.

How much cheering truth is contained in these words! Enough, it might be supposed, to satisfy those who could appropriate to themselves the privileges implied by the relation here set forth. Sons of God! His own children by adoption! a relation full of present privileges and high hopes of endless happiness in a future world! St. John contemplates it with rapturous admiration of the love of God. “Behold,” says he in the verse which precedes our text, “what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!” How indeed can it be described or estimated! Whether we consider the majesty and justice of the Almighty, or the guilt and unworthiness of his rebellious creatures; whether we view the blessings conferred, or the method of conferring them, the love manifested in their redemption and adoption truly passeth knowledge. The eternal Word was made flesh for man’s salvation. And He who for the sake of his adopted children has given his only begotten Son, “will also freely give them all things.” The world may hate and despise the faithful followers of the Lord, as they hated and despised him. But they can comfort themselves with the assurance, that they are “the sons of God,” and heirs, according to the promise of eternal life. What will be the specific nature of that life—what, or how glorious, will be the state of the redeemed in heaven, it is not given them to know. The apostle himself could not form an adequate conception of the joys of eternity; and confessed that “it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him;” like him in our

bodies, glorified and incorruptible, and in our souls pure and holy, as he is holy. We shall behold the glory of God in the person of Christ, the eternal Son of the Father.

There is a natural solicitude in the mind of man to know the condition—the particular circumstances of this future state of existence. And there is just enough revealed in the Scriptures to keep it constantly excited, in those who are ever more anxious to increase their knowledge, than careful to make good use of what they know. [But we all seek this knowledge of the future, with more or less eagerness, believers and unbelievers. They who reject Christianity, and are unenlightened by divine revelation, when they contemplate the dissolution of the body, say, in the language of Job, “Man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?” with little or no expectation of his future existence. But they who profess to believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ, make the same inquiry, with reference to the scene of his future life, and add the curious question, “In what body does he appear?” and what is the exact constitution of his renewed being?]

It might be a sufficient answer to such an inquiry, that we could not understand in our present imperfect state, any communications of the knowledge which is reserved for the state of full fruition in the world to come. “We now see through a glass darkly.” Our capacities are adapted to our condition of being.

And the limited range of our minds while connected with our corruptible bodies, is a good reason why so little is revealed to us of that which is not essential to salvation, and which would, perhaps, if revealed, unfit us for the duties of the present life. Enough has been revealed, if we will rightly improve it.

St. John says, “We know that when HE,” that is Christ, “shall appear, we shall be like him.” And St. Paul gives a more particular information, assuring us that “we shall be made like unto his glorious body.” Our souls will again inhabit a body; such is our assurance, and such is our profession of faith. “We believe in the resurrection of the body.” “There is a spiritual body,” so say the Scriptures—like unto Christ’s,—incorruptible and full of glory. “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.” Therefore we must be greatly changed: and we shall be. Christ shall change our vile body, and make it like unto his own glorious body.

What that glory is, we cannot now rightly understand. However we may be changed, we may be sure that we shall be the same;—we shall never lose our personal identity, or the consciousness of it. Hence it can only be a matter of mere curiosity what sort of bodies we shall inhabit. It should satisfy the Christian, that he will bear the image of his Lord, and have the full fruition of his presence and glory. And we may be sure that we shall awake, after death, to the knowledge of eternal things, with a perfect recollection of our condition of life here on earth.

Memory will never lose its power over the soul; but when it is freed from the many clogs with which it is now encumbered; when it is delivered from the burden of the flesh, it will assert its power mightily, as a scourge and a curse; or as a comfort and a blessing. And when we consider how active the faculties of the mind may become, when no longer limited by their connexion with the present body, we can hardly estimate the suffering or the delight which this faculty may cause in another life. The remembrance of abused privileges, and despised offers of grace, will come, with scorpion sting, to goad the wretched victims of sin in their place of darkness.

And, on the other hand, busy memory will summon up the precious fruits of faith, the spiritual joys of the believer on earth, to be compared by him with the higher and enduring bliss, (already partially experienced,) “of the sons of God,” in the presence of their approving Saviour.

If, therefore, my hearers, you are not yet entitled to the appellation which St. John claims for himself and his brethren, “strive diligently to lay hold on that hope which is an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast;”—the hope of eternal blessedness in the mansions which Christ has promised to his faithful followers.

And if, by faith, you have become the sons of God, then, while your hearts have been filled with gratitude for the inestimable love which your heavenly Father hath bestowed upon you, be careful to show yourselves “followers of God as dear children,” having a submissive as well as a trusting spirit. Cling to the title which you have acquired through divine grace, under all temptations. Though you may be called to bear much affliction, yea, even persecution in this life, hold fast your faith in the one, only

Saviour, being assured that, as he who was the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, "received the inheritance of the first-born," so shall ye who are heirs through him, receive your portion among the saints in light.

But how shall we know when we are the adopted sons of God? What is the evidence of true hope in Christ? Is it altogether a matter of feeling—a mere frame of mind? No. The Christian must be able to give some outward manifestation of the reality of that hopeful faith to which he lays claim. We will not dwell upon the evidence afforded by a sacramental union with Christ, in the church which he has established, although it must not be entirely passed over. To be true sons of God by adoption, we must be members of Christ; of his body the church, which is his spiritual household. The church catechism, which is a simple explanation of the doctrines received and set forth by her, teaches us that by baptism we are made "children of God, and heirs of everlasting life."

If this teaching were laid to heart by all who hear it, there would be more fixedness of church principle, more soberness of Christian feeling, and more sound practical religion in our midst, than we now find. Dreams of present spiritual relations and affections, are as unprofitable as those speculations about the future condition of our bodily constitution that have just been noticed. The demands of the Gospel are not satisfied by the cherishing of faith in the doctrines revealed by Christ; or the nursing of a sort of sentimental affection for the person of Christ, whom we are not to "know after the flesh." They require also submission to the outward ordinances, which are given as tests of love on our part, and proofs of grace and love on Christ's. You cannot be his disciples, unless you wear the badge, as well as exhibit the spirit of his adopted. If you are sons of God, through him, you will bear his name, and keep the discipline of his household. His name is bestowed in the rite of baptism. None are truly Christians who have not received it.

While, then, you are required to be joined to Christ outwardly, in the ordinances of the church, you are not to neglect that inward cleansing which the cherished influences of the Spirit can alone effect.

The Apostle urges this by way of inference from the declared

relation which we sustain to Christ our Redeemer, when he says, "Every man that hath this hope in Christ, purifieth himself even as he is pure." And this is in good keeping with the whole tenor of Holy Scripture, which, in setting forth the new covenant of grace, declares that if we would be partakers of Christ's glory, we must also partake of his Spirit, which is a Spirit of holiness. "Without holiness no man can see God." And our likeness to Christ must consist in purity of heart; for "out of the heart proceeds that which defileth a man." Thence are the issues of life. Let the fountain be impure, and the whole stream in all its wide flowings will be polluted. It is so in religion as in nature; and we cannot overlook this analogy without peril to our souls.

Christ's religion enjoins something more than the control of our outward actions by the precepts of the moral law, within the bounds of pure morality; it requires also the purification of our thoughts and affections, the subjection of the inner man to the will of our divine Saviour. And this it does, not only as a duty which we owe to him who hath redeemed us, but likewise as an essential of true happiness, one of the conditions of our being, as the children of a reconciled God. The happiness of a future life can be enjoyed only by the pure and holy. It can only be conceived of by these. Fallen man has lost the image, as well as the favour of God; and he cannot be restored through Christ, to his original condition, unless he be restored to that image. The sinless perfection of the Godhead cannot indeed be fully copied, till this mortal shall have put on immortality. But should we wait till we can possess all, before we enjoy any portion of the bliss which is promised to the believer? It is our interest, as well as our duty to strive after holiness continually. The scriptures represent the Christian life as a race that is to be run—as a road in which we must go forward. "Growth in grace," "increase of stature," and progress to perfection, are expressions which point out the duty of the believer in Christ. As soon as the favour of God is manifested to him by the gift of the Holy Spirit, through a sincere faith, it becomes the Christian's business for life, to seek, by the help of that Spirit, to retrace the image of God. And every mark of success in this endeavour, is at once a solid proof of the genuineness of his faith, and a continual source of satisfaction and delight.

If, then, you have this hope in Christ, which is grounded on faith, strive continually after holiness; for every step you take towards it brings you nearer to the enjoyment of heaven.

God manifested himself to man in the person of Jesus Christ, and said, "Be ye holy, for I am holy." As you resemble this pattern, you will be holy, and as you are holy in the sight of God, you will be happy. Let your thoughts be intently fixed on this subject of imitation, that you may grow in resemblance to the image which you behold. If you are the sons of God indeed, you will do so. It would be preposterous to suppose that you would pursue such a course in this life, as would unfit you for that state of being into which you hoped to enter after death. Who does not prepare himself for the station that he expects to occupy in society? And how should we judge that a person expected to move in a higher sphere of life, than that in which he had been wont to move, if he made no efforts to qualify himself for it?

So it is in the Christian life. It is directly inferred, that a true Christian will strive to attain, in this world, that character which he believes that he must attain, in order to enjoy the bliss which he expects in a world to come. And you need not flatter yourselves that you have a well grounded hope of future glory, through the Lord Jesus Christ, unless you strive to purify yourselves even as he is pure. Let this practical inference from the text receive your particular attention. And instead of seeking to be "wise above what is written," rejoice in the assurance that the true followers of Christ shall be fully satisfied when they awake after his likeness.

Be sure that you are heirs through him of the eternal inheritance, and it will be sufficient information, that if you persevere unto the end in the pursuit of holiness, you will receive all that your glorified Saviour has promised to bestow, and all that you may be able to enjoy.

This inheritance cannot fail—It is "incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away." We are indeed *only* heirs, as long as we live. But so long as we are really such,—have a good title to life eternal,—we are safe under the protecting power and sustaining grace of our divine Saviour. We may be unfaithful, and forfeit that which has been pledged to us conditionally. But

the promises of God fail not. They abide forever. Though our outward circumstances may be distressing, and may seem to betoken God's displeasure, (in the eyes of the world at least,) yet the hope of future bliss, which is fully justified by the word of God, will give us inward peace and joy.

Worldly prosperity is no part of the Christian's heritage. If he has it, and can bear it well—without damage to his spiritual state, it is so much gained. And if he has it not, he has good reason to believe that, if he is content with his lot, there is so much the more in store for him, of that spiritual treasure that will be his sure inheritance.

Make good your claim to the promises of God, my hearers, and then, whatever may be your worldly condition, you may rejoice in the hope of endless bliss in the kingdom of heaven. If you are, in this life, like Him who was a man of sorrows, despised and persecuted by those to whom he was sent, it will be great consolation to know that you will also be "like him" in that state of glory, which will be revealed in the life to come. "The servant is not above his master. But he that is perfect, shall be as his master." Let the toils of the race be endured for the sake of the crown. And be comforted and sustained by the divine assurance, that if you are Christ's, Christ is yours, with all the glory in which he shall be revealed on the right hand of God the Father. That you may be partakers of his great glory, may God grant for his mercies' sake, through his beloved Son. To whom, &c.

SERMON VII.

“He spake also this parable: A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering, said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it. And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that, thou shalt cut it down.”—LUKE xiii. 6—9.

THE direct and primary bearing of this parable of the barren fig tree, may be ascertained by a little attention to the few verses which directly precede it. They relate a very remarkable instance of the abuse of the teaching of God's providence in the temporal judgments denounced against sin, and the rebuke of it administered by our Saviour.

Some of the bystanders, on a certain occasion, brought to his notice, we know not under what special prompting, the fate of those Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. The particular incident to which they alluded, cannot be determined by any historic record known to us; nor is it material to the matter before us. It is certain that an allusion was made to a scene of blood, in which there was a *supposed instance* of divine vengeance upon the victims. So we may infer from our Saviour's interrogative reply, “Suppose ye, that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things?” This was imputing to them the opinion, that the fate of these victims was but the just judgment of God for their particular sins. He denies their conclusion, saying, “I tell you, nay; but except you repent” of your sins, “you shall all likewise perish.” Having mentioned another case, from which they might draw a like conclusion, which he disposes of in the same way, he spake the parable of “the barren fig tree.” Now it may justly be concluded from the threat uttered by our Lord, (that if these mis-

judging men did not repent, they should likewise perish,) that he referred to the temporal judgment which would befall the Jewish nation.

The parable, therefore, may be taken, in its primary application, to refer to the threatened and suspended judgment of God for national sins. Yet in this sense it was meant to bear hard upon the individuals who were so eager to find in their fellow men, sins which call for tokens of God's wrath, as to overlook their own liability to just condemnation. For these men, who were particularly addressed by our Lord, seemed to be prompted by a disposition to condemn their fellow mortals, as well as a common and natural desire to communicate tidings of calamity. For they looked upon this as a very remarkable instance of God's wrath against sin—worth telling surely, since the sufferers were overtaken by judgment while in the act of offering sacrifices—being made victims of vengeance, while they were providing victims of propitiation. And the emphasis laid upon the mark of exceeding sinfulness in the sacrificed Galileans, carried with it a comparison of their own characters, presented in a favourable light by contrast. But whatever may have been the keenness of scent, or malevolence of feeling, which they displayed in hunting for marks of God's judgment, it is plain that our Lord turned their pursuit by his pointed rebuke, and fixed their gaze upon their own weakness and sins. He says in effect, "Think not that the severity of God's wrath fell upon these men, as *specially deserving* it, for you too will incur it; unless you repent of your wickedness, and turn unto God, all this rebellious nation will come to destruction." It was, therefore, a personal warning to each one of them, while it was a threatening of a *national punishment* for *national wickedness*, which was indeed literally fulfilled in the lifetime, perhaps, of some who were then present. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish," was a close and fearful rebuke, and at the same time a merciful warning: the rod of wrath was held over them, but time was given to avert the stroke, by submission to the will of God, whose long-suffering and unwillingness that any should perish, should lead men to repentance.

But besides the primary application, there is in the parable a voice of spiritual warning, and a tone of practical teaching for all who are subject to God's final judgment for unforgiven sins. And

we shall attempt to bring home this teaching to the hearts of all who presume upon the long-suffering of God, and count it slackness, by setting forth the mercy which stays the hand of justice, and prolongs the day of grace to the sin-hardened or procrastinating and indifferent transgressor.

Well has it been remarked by a distinguished German writer, "The discourse of Jesus, severe and full of rebuke, is closed by a parable, in which the merciful Son of man again brings the side of grace prominently forward. He appears as the intercessor for men before the righteousness of the heavenly Father, as he who obtains for them space for repentance. This idea of the deferring of the judgment of God so as to leave men opportunity to turn, runs through all the holy Scriptures; before the deluge a period of a hundred and twenty years was fixed: Abraham prayed for Sodom; the destruction of Jerusalem did not follow till forty years after the ascension of our Lord; and the coming again of Christ is put off through the patience of God."—(Olshausen in Trench on Parables.)

Behold then, the long-suffering and the severity of God in the parable before us, which we shall briefly notice in its main points. "A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard."

The vineyard of the Lord is his church, in the common language of the scripture, both in the parables and in prophecy. In this case, however, so far as the parable applies to men collectively, in respect to judgments upon the church or upon nations—the vineyard must stand for the world. In the midst of the world the Jews were placed as the chosen people of God, to bring forth unto him fruit worthy of his name, and of the privileges bestowed upon them. "And he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none."

He who had planted the fig tree—the God who had established his church—his chosen people Israel, to whom he had made himself known by mercies and privileges which called for grateful devotion, had not been duly honoured. He had not found the fruit which he had sought.

How beautiful and significant is this common image in the figurative language of holy scripture, by which the intelligent creatures of God's hand and objects of His love are likened to trees, and their works to fruit. The works of men spring from an in-

ward principle, either the natural one, which is evil, and brings forth fruit after its kind, or the ingrafted one of faith, which comes from God, and brings forth good works acceptable to God. Fruit is the organic product of the tree, the outward manifestation of the inner life—the evidence of the hidden principle, both as to its existence and its quality. Hence we perceive the truth, as well as expressiveness of the scriptural illustration of the harmony between the outward life and the professed principles, afforded by the practical maxim, that “a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.”

Year after year, for three years, (which was surely time for the tree to have come to maturity,) the Lord of the vineyard looked in vain for fruit. “Then said he to the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none; cut it down—why cumbereth it the ground?” We need not attempt to show the precise intimation of the term of years here, whether the three years point to as many periods or modes of dispensing mercy and truth, in the history of God’s dealings with His people, (as some have supposed,) or whether we are merely to understand by them a patient waiting on the part of God—long forbearings towards the subjects of his authority and of his tender love. It is enough, that in the words of the owner of the vineyard who commanded that the tree should be cut down, we have presented to us the impending judgment of divine wrath, the sentence pronounced against a disobedient and unfaithful people. “Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?” is the judgment of the indignant owner. And here the meaning is not that the tree occupies room which might be filled by a fruitful one. The word rendered “cumbereth” means more than this. It signifies that the tree was not only unproductive and unprofitable, and, therefore, was not to be suffered to stand where a good one might grow, but was positively injurious to the vineyard, by exhausting the substance of the soil, which it drew away from other trees, and casting a blighting shade over them, to the damage of the owner.

So the Jewish church, by its failure to fulfil the designs of God, in working righteousness to his glory and their own well-being, not only was unfruitful, but injurious. Instead of showing to the

world the purifying and ennobling influence of the religion which had been revealed to them, they caused the name of God to be blasphemed by the Gentiles, and hindered the spread of the knowledge of God, by their gross wickedness, their arrant hypocrisy, and their cunning craftiness, in evading the law through their traditions. How close and searching, as well as solemn, this teaching is in reference to the mischievous influence of evil example in individual professors of religion, we shall consider by and by.

At present we are concerned with the delinquency of the church of God—the people of his choice. The doom of this people was threatened long before it was executed. An intercessor came to gain a reprieve for them, as the tree was spared one year, that it might have the benefit of further appliances of culture. The dresser of the vineyard interposed a plea in behalf of the barren tree: “Lord, let it alone this year also, till I bestow more pains upon it, and if, after that, it bear no fruit, let it go; I will plead no more, thou shalt cut it down.” Who this intercessor was in behalf of the people of God, either collectively or individually, can admit of no doubt. The Son of God—the divine Messiah of the Jews—the Christ of God, the Saviour of all men, is here represented. He stands between the people of God and his justice, the personification of love, pleading for mercy—for a little more forbearance towards the guilty, a little longer time for repentance. He whom the Jews persecuted, scoffed at, and crucified, whose blood, with all the dreadful retribution which it would bring upon them, they imprecated upon themselves and their children—He who gave them the timely warning of the doom which awaited them, was the great Intercessor, by whose mediation their judgment was postponed. He pleads for more time, larger space for trial, more means and appliances—if peradventure they will repent and escape destruction. They were permitted to have the benefit of all the Saviour’s teaching, all the signs and miracles which set forth his authority to teach, as well as his divine power, through the whole course of his ministry. And not until they had exhausted the patience of God, by persevering obstinacy of hatred and contempt, in the rejection of Christ’s claims and reviling of his person—yea, cruel mocking, scourging and crucifying of the Lord of glory—not till after he had risen from the dead and ascended into heaven, whence he sent forth the Holy Spirit to ac-

credit his chosen apostles, and give life and energy to the church, yea, not till the incorrigible people had mocked at the Holy Ghost, and despised and persecuted the apostles for forty years; did the cup of wrath overflow, in a flood of ruin upon their guilty heads.

How strikingly are the goodness and severity of God exhibited together in his dealings with his people! Messenger after messenger was sent unto them with a message of wrath mingled with love,—mercy ever ready to shield, and pointing to the scorner's doom, with a view to the reclaiming of the scorner. The prophets "who saw afar off" the Messiah's coming, uttered their trumpet-cry of warning, and set forth in types the rejection of the rejectors. John the Baptist, the forerunner and herald of the Saviour, showed them the axe laid at the root of the tree, ready to cut it down, as a sign of threatened excision, and preached, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Jesus the Christ, when he came to fulfil all the law and the prophets, spake plainly and in dark parables of the wrath of God, while he illustrated the mercy of God, even in the very menaces of retributive judgment, weeping in sorrow over a people that would not be spared, and breathing love around him in miraculous healing of the body's infirmities, and soothing of the heart's distresses, that he might bring men to a willingness to receive their soul's salvation. But all was fruitless labour of love. The tocsin of God's wrath tolled long and loud its fearful note; but the doomed people of God were bound in a spell of their own deep incantation—and they rushed like the fire-maddened steed, despite all the efforts to save, into a certain and terrible destruction.

From this view of the first and direct bearing of the parable, with its incidental glancing at individual warning, let us turn to the solemn lesson which it reads to the unfruitful cumberer of the Lord's vineyard, the church of Christ; to the careless, inconsistent, and injurious member, who, despite the Lord's patient waiting, continues to bring reproach upon the Lord, by an evil example. We may surely make this application properly, and we trust, profitably. For, as the bystanders who were personally rebuked of the Lord, were doubtless members of the Jewish church, some of that people who had so many warnings, and perhaps shared in the common destruction, so there may be some in every assembly of

Christian worshippers, in whose hearing these judgments are rehearsed, who may come within the scope of the personal application of the rule of such judgments, in respect to spiritual and eternal retributions. Nor do we propose to limit the application to the professed followers of Christ, disappointing the just expectation and denying the rightful claim of their Lord. The parable rings out a loud and solemn peal to those whom Christ has visited with his offers of grace in vain—who have long resisted his appeals—long turned a deaf ear to his call into his well planted vineyard. One safe rule may be laid down by the expounders of Christ's parables, setting forth religious truth under familiar and striking images. It is this, that in their practical bearing for spiritual instruction or warning, they do apply to all to whom they will apply consistently with the established doctrines of Christ. We know no better rule than this.

In considering this parable agreeably to this rule of application, we would commend its solemn tone of warning, mingled with its voice of affectionate solicitude, to every member of Christ whose conscience writes reproof for a fruitless profession, or for positive injury to the cause of Christ, as well as to every one, who, having often been urged to become a member of Christ and heir through hope of his glorious inheritance, has despised the call, or resolved to try the long-suffering of God to the utmost. To either of these classes of men, the word of God through Christ Jesus addresses itself, and says in the ear of each individual, "Barren tree of the Lord, why cumberest thou the ground?" This is the tone of the searching justice of God, and of the purity of his holy law, demanding the immediate cutting off of the transgressor. What can he allege in stay of judgment? Has not God called to you often, and bid you, sinful man, doomed to eternal death, come unto him and receive a title to everlasting life? Has not the divine Saviour come to you with the word of peace, the blessed assurance that he is the propitiation for our sins—that those who come to him he will in no wise cast out? And has he not often deplored your wilful obstinacy, saying, "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life?"

All these means of grace have been neglected or despised; and they are so many additions to the weight of your condemnation, enforcing the demands of God's law for judgment against transgressors. Now against this demand, just though severe, the Lord

Jesus Christ constantly enters his plea for mercy, interposes his tender love in your behalf, and asks another year of grace, that he may multiply means and appliances for your spiritual redemption. "Lord, let it alone this year also," that I may strive with it yet more, bringing to bear upon it the mellowing influences of the Holy Spirit, the sunshine and the dew of my love, in hope that it may become fruitful: "And after that,"—alas! how slow is the great Mediator to write the doom of those who mock and despise him, feeling for those who will not feel for themselves!—and after that renewed offer of grace, thou shalt cut it down.

We must not conceive of God as being unwilling to spare, while Christ is so earnestly pleading for the condemned sinner. There can be no variance between the Father and the Son, in this matter; on the contrary, Christ was the love of God embodied for man's salvation. His sacrifice of redemption, though necessary as a propitiation, and demanded by God as such, was also ordained by God in the beginning, through tender mercy towards man, and revealed to man as an assurance of his love, which so yearned for the sinner whom his justice must condemn for transgression. Remember, that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself;" and although we must distinguish the two persons in the scheme of redemption, and in the parable which represents them, we must do this with a tender appreciation of the Saviour's intervention, while we form no unworthy conception of God.

Grasp at once, if you can, the height and breadth of God's law, with its unyielding demands, and the depth of Christ's love, making by his bloody offering, a full satisfaction of those demands. And while you strive to realize the peril of a state of rebellion against God, being condemned by his law to eternal death, and having no share in the benefit of his covenant of grace through Christ, bow your heads and your hearts to "the light and easy yoke" of that mighty Saviour, who, with his life-blood bought the salvation which he offers you, and who with strong supplication for you, and piteous entreaty with you, implores the sparing of the barren tree yet longer, and your timely yielding of the fruits of faith, that you may not be cut down and cast out, withered and condemned, for the final burning. Lest this should be your fate, impenitent, scoffing, and reckless sinner, or half converted world-

loving, world-fearing, temporizing sinner, consider seriously how many years the Lord has borne with you, that you may be now at the end of your last year of grace obtained by your Divine Intercessor, and that soon the decree may be written, "I plead no more, cut it down,"—and you pass to hopeless, eternal condemnation.

Members of Christ, trees of his planting, from which he has a right to expect good fruits of faith,—works of righteousness—if any of you may be justly charged with barrenness, if you cumber the vineyard of the Lord, hinder the growth of the church by a scandalous life, take good heed to the teaching of the parable. If you are spared from year to year, notwithstanding your neglect of your privileges and practical denial of the faith which you profess, remember that you owe your continued possession of the means of grace to the merciful intercession of the Lord, whom you hold up to the blasphemy of the world, and help to crucify afresh, and bring to open shame. If the year of prolonged grace be not improved, you may be given over to a judicial hardening, which will be equivalent to excision from the church of Christ, the covenant of grace, the assured hope of everlasting life.

May God avert this terrible doom from every adopted son in Christ Jesus, and keep the door of mercy open to all who now despise his covenant, that they may lay hold on eternal salvation!

SERMON VIII.

“And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other.”—GENESIS xiii. 10, 11.

IN obedience to a special call from God, Abram left his native land and journeyed under the guidance of faith in divine providence and grace, unto a promised land which should be the inheritance of his numerous posterity. He was then childless. But the promised seed was afterwards given to him who became the father of the faithful.

On this journey of faith he was accompanied by his wife, his nephew Lot, and his whole household, including many servants. They came into Canaan, which was the country designated as his inheritance, and which Lot seemed willing then to share.

Passing through the land which was at that time in the possession of the Canaanites, a people afterwards driven out by the Israelites, Abram pitched his tent, and builded an altar unto God, on a mountain near Bethel, on the borders of the territory known as the lots of Ephraim and Benjamin. Having been driven thence by a famine into Egypt, where they sojourned for a time, they returned to the place where the altar had been set up for the worship of the true God. Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver and in gold. And Lot also had flocks, and herds and tents.

As there was not sufficient pasturage for the flocks and herds of both, there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram and those of Lot, and lest it should cause a personal difficulty between the kinsmen, Abram proposed a separation. He said to Lot, “Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and

between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.

“And Lot lifted up his eyes and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other.

“Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom.”

We propose to consider at this time the choice of a new home made by Lot, and the motives to it—showing the misery and mischief which resulted from it—and then make a practical application of the whole subject, for the edification of those who are called to the inheritance of which Canaan was the type.

Casting his eyes over the country spread out before him, Lot beheld a plain well watered and rich in verdure, which promised abundant pasturage. His many herds would there, doubtless, multiply exceedingly. He would surely be able to increase his riches, and become a mighty prince with a large retinue of servants and subjects; vast possessions, with the power and means of personal gratification which pertain to them, occupied the field of his mind's vision, as the expanded plain over which his cattle would roam in rich pastures, filled the sight of his eyes.

It was of little moment to him, with such a prospect before him, that he was about to leave the consecrated place where the altar of God had been raised. The pious recollection of the Lord's gracious presence, and the renewed assurance of his special favour to his called and faithful worshipper, came not between the lust for worldly riches, and the eager grasping of the offered means of its full feeding. The hope of sharing with Abram the prospective blessings which would accrue to the holy seed from which redemption should spring, which seemed to have once been a motive to action, is now smothered by the pressing cares for the things which cannot redeem from sorrow, death or condemnation.

No fear of apostacy from the true faith in the one living eternal and only God, pointed its finger of warning, though the way to

wealth led through the hosts of the ungodly and idolatrous. No tearful regret at parting with the faithful to wander from his altars, cast a momentary dimness over the bright prospect of worldly gain. The plain was rich, and well watered, what if it bordered on wicked Sodom! Already was Lot an idolater. Covetousness was the idol set up in his heart. Homage is paid there. What are all the privileges of adoption by the Lord God to a covenant relation? What are all the promises to Abram, (though he might reasonably hope to share them) to covetous Lot, with his eyes and his heart resting on large possessions in flocks and herds?

Fired with this one passion, led onward by the image worship, which even the church of God in all ages, has found it hard to cast out—the idolatry of riches—he turned away from the privileges of religion, of social intercourse with his kinsfolk, and the prospect of God's blessing upon all his doings, and plunged into the midst of associations and temptations which could not fail to bring him to the works and the fruits of ungodliness. He went and joined himself to the men of Sodom, bold and daring above all men in their wickedness, reckless in their defiance of God.

When next we hear of him, we find him reaping some of the bitter fruits of his folly. By casting himself among the Sodomites, he became involved in their troubles. In the wars caused by their rebellion against the kings who held them in subjection, their city was taken and plundered of all the goods in which they had revelled. Among the captives which were taken either as trophies or hostages, Lot was carried away, even the righteous Lot, who had as yet done no iniquity. But being led by his covetousness into bad company, he was compelled to share in the common calamity. Many an honest man has brought upon himself suffering and injury, by imprudently venturing into the midst of wicked society. And many a truly pious person has tasted of the bitter cup of sorrow, mingled with his own hand at the feast of vanity, in which he was induced to sit with the ungodly and the profane. Lot, we are told, long vexed his righteous soul with the wicked Sodomites, and we shall see how much he was punished for his covetousness. With the plunder which enriched the conquerors, went the goods of Lot, those very goods which, though they should have satisfied him, were the fuel which fed the flame

of his idolatry. How emphatic is the testimony of history in this case! The record is, "And they took Lot, Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed."

Lot is spoken of in terms which bring to mind his near relation to him who was called of God to be the father of the faithful, the circumstances of his separation, the goods which caused it, and the loss of those goods, through an unwise choice of a place of settlement. Thus while the name of Abram, here introduced, suggests all the promises of God's favour to him who dwelt in tents in the land of promise, it points to the strong contrast presented by the condition of his kinsman, who in the city of luxurious and ungodly Sodom, suffered the loss of the worldly goods which he preferred to the final inheritance of which he might have been a partaker.

Thus are God's people taught, that if in choosing for themselves happiness, they follow the promptings of their lusts, and are led away from God, they forfeit his protection, and become ensnared in the pit-falls which they have put in their own path. And they may reasonably expect to be deprived of those worldly goods, or at least, to be miserable in the use of them, the love of which has supplanted their devotion to God.

Through the generous and heroic intervention of Abram, Lot and his goods were recovered and brought back. But the people of Sodom went on in the way of wickedness straight to their doom. In the fulness of their iniquity they were destroyed. God called Lot, with his wife and daughters out of Sodom, and then poured down upon Sodom and Gomorrah, fire and brimstone, which utterly destroyed them.

But look at the mischief and the misery which resulted to his own family. The fatal disobedience of his wife, by which she became a monument of God's vengeance, the unnatural and wicked conduct of his daughters by which they became the mothers of two ungodly nations, which were snares to the chosen people of God; these were the evil consequences of an idolatrous covetousness. How much food for wise reflection do we find in this history of Lot! How many sorrows and evils cluster around his path as soon as he separates himself from the inheritance which God offered to bestow; leaves the altar of God, and the society of the godly, and wanders in search of more worldly possessions! In company of the wicked, whom he gladly would have

turned unto the Lord, but he was overborne by their wickedness; he shared their calamities, while he felt the corrupting influence of evil communications. And he who might have continued to be mentioned with honour, as "Abram's brother's son," during the whole of the signal history of the father of the faithful, is blotted from the page of the sacred narrative, at the close of a dark record of criminal lust.

Now, perhaps you may say, my hearers, this is surely a striking picture of the evil results of an unwise course of conduct, but what is the application of the matter to ourselves? Will you give us your close and patient attention, while we endeavour to show how it applies to our own times.

Ours is an age of restlessness, of enterprise, of wide discovery, constant emigration, and greedy covetousness. Men cannot stay at home upon their well tilled and moderately yielding farms, where their households have the quiet enjoyment of domestic peace and comfort, of social intercourse with a good neighbourhood, and the regular worship of God, as well as all the other privileges of the church, because they have caught a glimpse, or heard reports of rich and fertile plains afar off, where larger crops can be made with the same outlay of labour and cost. Fired with the one passion for large and rapid accumulation, the happy homestead, where there was enough of all the common comforts of life, must be abandoned, and the journey begun to the far west, where the plain like that of Jordan spreads out to view. Well watered everywhere, it promises a vast increase, and the heart of the emigrant leaps at the thought of sudden and immense wealth.

The plain is reached. The first year is spent in furnishing a rude shelter for the family; time, which, if diligently used at home, might have enabled the restless wanderer to have added largely to his wealth.

The rude dwelling brings to the unwonted tenants disease and suffering. The well watered land becomes flooded by the swelling of the river which gave such promise of fruitfulness, and the flood destroys the crop, while it adds to the danger of disease, which besets the exposed family who miss the protection which their forsaken home afforded. No neighbour is near to assist in nursing the sick, or comforting the desponding. The nearest dwelling

has for its tenants those who have the like scenes of loneliness and sorrow around them. Death comes to cast its dark gloom over the dwelling; and kindred must do what kindred ever shrink from doing, the last sad offices for those who are to be put out of sight forever.

No minister of Christ is there with consolation for the mourner, or the solemn but cheering service for the dead that sleep in Christ; for the wanderers have gone away from the place where the altar of God is set up.

Covetous Lot has separated himself from the faithful. Thirst for gain has taken the place of thirst for righteousness, and longing for the temple of the Lord. There is no water springing from the well of life, in that well watered land. And in the sad hour when dust is laid to mingle with the dust of the earth, there is no voice to utter the Christian's triumph over death and the grave through the victory which Christ has gained.

This is a sad account to give of a family which has once had all the blessings, domestic, social, and religious, which belong to a well settled neighbourhood. Soon the head of the family casts about for some means of supplying the want of church and school privileges. Perhaps there is a small village not a great way off. Can he find help there? Ah! there "the ungodly sons of Sodom" dwell, who will vex the heart of righteous Lot.

He calls upon the scattered settlers who have gone like himself to a new country, and urges them to join their force with his to build a house in some central place, which shall serve for church and school house. It is done, perhaps, after a considerable delay, and at a great cost of time and labour, which has been drawn from the main object of their migration.

And then comes a piteous appeal to the Missionary Society, a Macedonian cry for help. Send us a talented and devoted man, who will come to this desolate region, and be both minister and teacher. They ask, it may be, the same labourer, whose bare maintenance at home had been eked out by their withdrawn contribution, to come and starve more generously with them. The appeals are all unheeded. The building designed for church and school-house, becomes a lodge for hunters, or a place of gathering for runaways. The children are neglected, and grow up rude and ignorant, and it may be also wicked, as they doubt-

less will be, if there is a village hard by; the father becomes desperate, the mother broken-hearted; or at best, their lives are sad and sorrowful, repining at the folly of breaking up their happy home, in their eagerness for the promised riches of the well watered plain.

Now for all the privations which they mourn,—even though they be not so great as we have supposed, what have these greedy seekers of wealth really gained? Have they reaped larger crops, or added to their worldly store? No. The very and only object of the movement has failed. The average of crops has been less than had rewarded their labour in the land whence they came. And they submit to their condition with all the philosophy which they can command, because they are either ashamed or unable, to return to the better land, where a competence was enjoyed in the midst of the social and religious privileges which can throw a charm around even the abode of poverty.

Now we ask in all frankness, as well as tenderness, if these sad results do not often follow the eager, or the reckless abandonment of God's altar, the casting away of the privileges of education and religion, of regular worship, and the ministrations of the church?

We have pointed to the "fruitful plain," which promised wealth to the covetous, or the unsatisfied, as the lure which draws men often away from God, and from happiness. But it matters not whether the river which washes the new and far off land, brings down the rich soil, which fertilizes the crops, or bears to the open hand of the gold hunter, the precious sands which are washed from the mines of the mountains: it is the same eager haste to be rich, which now shakes society to its foundations, whose deplorable results we hold up to view.

Look at the vast crowd who have left their homes, which health and peace and competence, social joys, and religious consolations gilded with a radiance which gold cannot buy, with the hope of finding riches in piles beneath their feet. Each is stirred by fancies of a coming wealth, which will have no want to be supplied. But though he became like an Inca of Peru, and could display in his own house the rich splendour of the temple of the Sun, his heart being the slave of an idol, would pine for the free-

dom which dwells in the home of the patient and thankful man, who waits on the Lord in the diligent exercise of his calling.

What, then, would we teach as the practical use of this discourse? To undervalue enterprise? Far from it. To condemn all who have left their homes with the hope of bettering their condition? Far from this. To withhold your help to the missionary society, which sends out ministers to the far off settlers of the west? No; by no means. We would, if we could, care for those who will not care for themselves. We would send the ministers of Christ on the trail of the wanderers, who had heedlessly turned their backs upon the altar of God. We would do this rather than let them want the privileges which we hold dear.

This is the lesson which we would have you learn, to let well enough alone, not to be in haste to grow rich, and to count the blessings of health and peace, social and domestic comfort, and above all the regular enjoyment of the worship of God, and of the privileges of the church, as of far greater value than gold.

Find your chief joy in living near to God and Christ. For the droppings of the sanctuary will fill your basket with precious things, which no well watered land, or stream of golden sands can supply. The goodliest heritage which the children of men can have, is that which belongs to the sons of God in Christ Jesus. Dig for gold in the land of promise, the Canaan of the spiritual Israel. Sow your seed in the furrows that are watered of God's grace, and you will have a spiritual harvest which will gladden the soul forever.

Search for the hidden treasure of God's word, by the help of his Holy Spirit, and you will lay up the riches which will never perish, the glorious inheritance of the children of God in the kingdom of heaven.

SERMON IX.

“Go, wash in the pool of Siloam.”—JOHN ix. 7.

THE subject of the chapter from which our text is taken is the miraculous giving of sight to a man blind from his birth by our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus had just come from the temple where he had so openly claimed a proper divinity that the Jews had begun to stone him for blasphemy. Having set himself above their father Abraham, and thereby provoked the charge of being possessed by a demon, he declared his original appointment as a Mediator, whose coming Abraham prophetically beheld; and when they were staggered by this claim, he asserted his pre-existence in terms which if the claim were not a real one, would indeed have been blasphemy of the highest order. “Before Abraham was I am”—was the positive declaration of Jesus. And this is not common language. He does not say before Abraham was I was. But he uses the words “I am;” a term only used in Holy Writ by Jehovah himself, signifying eternal being, “the same yesterday, to-day and forever.” Let this be well pondered, before we pass to the miracle and its accompanying circumstances of impressive teaching. For in these days of wide-spreading heresy, we mean that “the trumpet” within these walls “shall give no uncertain sound.” We know not how to refute the charge of the Jews, that Jesus was a blasphemer, if he was not what the church holds him to be, truly God.

We may now see how Jesus, claiming to be God, exercised his divine power. Seeing a blind man by the way-side, as he escaped from the temple, he declared to his disciples that he was “the light of the world,” and then proceeded to give light to him who had been all his lifetime in darkness. Wetting a little clay with

the moisture of his own mouth, he anointed the eyes of the blind man, "And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam—he went his way, therefore, and washed, and came seeing." The means used by our Lord were very simple, and he could have given sight to the blind without using any external appliances, had he willed so to do. But Divine Wisdom chose to display divine power in this particular way, by means of second causes, and to record these things for our instruction, that we may learn to trust to the efficacy of divine appointments, however simple they may seem. The instrumentality used by our Lord was very simple, but it was positive. There was no choice left to the man who needed Christ's help. There was but one way, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam." Jesus might have led the blind man to the water and washed him,—or might have sent for water to wash off the clay, or wiped it off without water. These means used did not add power to him who employed them. They only tried the faith of the subject of Christ's tender care and compassion. Christ demanded faith in his power, and submission to his will, even in the most simple of his positive appointments. You will readily perceive therefore, my brethren, the main points of our text in its bearing upon the spiritually blind, to whom Christ alone can give sight. He is "the light of the world lying in darkness and sin." Mankind are all blind from their birth to all heavenly things. Christ gives light to all to whom he comes; he reveals the sinfulness of our hearts and the way to be cleansed from it; he discloses guilt, and offers pardon to the guilty. And while he unfolds to our opened eyes the glory and the bliss of a heavenly inheritance, he gives means of grace by which we may be trained through life for the state beyond the grave, of eternal dwelling near the throne of light.

In order to have the benefit of those means, and hence of the discipline for, and foretaste of the bliss of the ransomed, we must have faith in the power and willingness of the offered Saviour, and show submission to his will even in his positive, and to us seemingly unessential ordinances. Has "the entrance of God's word, which giveth light to the simple," shown you the darkness of your sinful state and the need of God's mercy through an appointed Mediator? Have you realized your condition of peril through wickedness, and turned your ear to the truth made known in the gospel, that "Christ is the propitiation for all sin?"

Have you heard the precious assurance, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but might have everlasting life?" "He that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation." Have you heard the tender invitation of the Saviour, "Come unto me, all ye that are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest"—and the sure promise, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out?" And do you believe that Christ has power to save, that he will give you spiritual sight and spiritual clearness? Then will you be ready to listen to his positive command, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam;" go, wash in the water of baptism; there receive the sign of regeneration, the token of your new birth into a life of light and righteousness. There, too, give the sign and pledge of your acceptance of Christ's mercy and of your acknowledged duty to keep all his commandments. Will you rebel against this requirement of your Lord? Like the Syrian leper, who indignantly spurned the simple but appointed washing in the river Jordan, will you cast away a divine ordinance, deeming it unmeaning and ineffectual? Think you that the leper would ever have been cleansed, or the blind man ever have received sight, had the simple but commanded rite, in either case, not been observed? We leave these questions to be answered to yourselves in all fairness. With these examples of physical healing by divine power with the use of means positively ordained, fairly set before us, we might strongly argue in favour of a like submission to simple ordinances in religious matters, in moral and spiritual healing, although we had no authoritative teaching on the subject. But when we read the word of Christ, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," and this commission to his apostles to make disciples of all nations, "baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." When we hear the apostle's answer to the cry of the convicted, "What shall we do to be saved?" saying, "Repent, and be baptized for the remission of sin;" when we know that the Spirit spake by the mouth of Ananias to Paul, bowed to the earth by the power of a special revelation, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins;" when we gather these and other like proofs of the importance and efficacy of baptism, we may well apply to every one seeking salvation through Christ to give the outward sign of faith, and receive the

holy pledge of acceptance in the holy rite, which Christ has made the door to his visible church. The church demands no magnifying of the holy ordinances above the value which Christ gave them. She cannot surely allow any undervaluing of them. They are holy because they are his—they are efficacious because he made them so—and in the degree in which he ordained them to be subservient to his purposes of grace. To neglect them because we cannot understand their purport is as much a rejection of Christ's authority as any open way of denying him. And this we say on his own testimony, for one of his apostle's declarations is, "For whosoever shall offend in one point, he is guilty of all"—that is, (for God forbid that we should seem to strain the word of God or leave you under any misapprehension of its tone or teaching,) "disobedience of any one command is a transgression of the law"—and transgression of law is a defiance of authority. But the true test of faith is submission to the will of God in Christ—and that submission must be an unquestioning one, because it is prompted by faith in divine mercy, and sustained by grateful love for the Saviour.

To the unbaptized, who profess with their lips to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the only Saviour from sin and death, we show the water of baptism, sanctified by the Lord, and repeat for his guidance the words of that Lord to the blind man whom he would heal, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam." We make a like application of our text to the other holy ordinance of Christ—the Lord's supper, the communion of his body and blood, and the apostolic introduction to it, the rite of confirmation. And we include confirmation, because, if the end is commanded, the means appointed by rightful authority are surely to be employed as a Christian duty. And we say to those who were baptized in childhood and have never openly confessed their Christian obligations, growing out of their Christian privileges, that the words of our text bear as strong an authority by force of analogy for the use of the ordinance of the supper, as for that of baptism. Would that all to whom it will apply, would take heed to its teaching? But alas, how many there are who have been washed in the water of baptism during the period of infancy or childhood, and who should have been nourished in the Christian life ever since by the holy influences provided by their almighty and merciful Saviour, but who are dead branches of the

vine, giving no evidence of union with him. They have grown up to manhood or womanhood, perhaps, without availing themselves of their birth-right privilege, or avowing their obligation to keep the covenant of which they are partakers, through the ordinances of Christ, bringing the children in with their parents, and although they are answerable for the privileges afforded, and will if they persist in rejecting them be condemned, for despising the blood of the covenant, they withhold themselves from the joys of the inheritance, and their testimony to the truth of God's word and the efficacy of his holy sacraments. And this is a serious matter, a solemn consideration for all who are in the sad predicament. They who have been brought to baptism by their parents or sponsors, and who neglect to take upon themselves the vows of baptism, do virtually refuse to obey the spirit of Christ's command to them, so well signified in our text. They resist his authority and despise his promises. How little do they consider the eternal consequences of their rejection of a privilege which affection or duty had placed within their reach.

Grafted into the olive tree, ere they knew the wildness of their original root, they might have partaken of the fatness of the tree, and grown into a fruit-bearing vigour, after the likeness of that into which they were incorporated. Even now, my hearers, there may be life, although there be no development—life waiting action to give the outward manifestation of it. In many a soul there is, doubtless, a restlessness of feeling, under the prompting of God's Spirit, which from time to time bids the child of God, who has not yet fully bargained with Satan for his birth-right of Christian parents, leave the state of inaction, which is next to death, and spring into a condition of healthful action, of fruitful faith, of vital godliness. They want but the very turn of the scale in which they are now balancing to cast them on the Lord's side forever.

Why not give an outward expression to the feeling which stirs you? Why not confess that the Lord has already anointed your eyes for effectual healing, and has bid you, "Go, wash, and return seeing?" Go look at the pool in which you were unconsciously washed, see what duties the washing imposes, and begin the work of obedience. Convinced that Christ commands, let your future life be marked by a prayerful endeavour to submit to his will. If you have been united to Christ, in the brother-

hood of the church by the rite of holy baptism, feed upon him who is your life in the communion of his body and blood by faith with thanksgiving. Spiritual, as well as natural growth, requires nourishment; regular supplies of it promote the most healthy growth. Practical duties springing from true feeling serve to keep alive the feeling from which they spring. Let every baptized person strive to realize the obligation to confess Christ openly, and with an assurance that Christ will help him to fan the flame which he is disposed to cherish, let him go step by step (faltering though the first step may be,) on the way of obedience to his Lord. The positive ordinance is a trial of faith as well as a means of growth in grace—of faith in the assurance that it is a means. So far is it a wholesome discipline. And then it is a means of grace, reflexly considered, because it is a trial of faith which strengthens it, and keeps it in vigorous action. Why should it be neglected by so many who have been sealed with “the outward sign of regeneration,” and who might, if they would, obey commands which they often feel pressing heavily on their conscience, become living, fruitful members of Christ, holding the pledges, and enjoying the foretaste of his heavenly inheritance? Have you then, my hearers, been thus brought nigh to Christ, sacramentally, and have you learned to look upon him as your divine and only Saviour, one mighty to save and merciful to heal? Do you look only to him for salvation, and do you desire to confess him before men, and to walk by his help in all his commandments? Then give your pledge to him humbly in the rite of confirmation, as a step to the altar where the communion of his body and blood may be periodically enjoyed.

Our text does not limit us to the application to the observance of Christ's positive ordinances. Faith manifested by obedience is the subject embraced by it. And as the observance of the positive ordinances, although commanded without respect to any moral benefits, and therefore binding, leads to the exercise of practical godliness in the cultivation of holy affections, and the working of the outspringing deeds of charity and virtue, we might properly extend our view to these. And we do press the obligation upon all “who name the name of Christ” to use Christian ordinances as a help to godliness of life. Let them be careful, too, lest they make the observance of ordinances a sub-

stitute for a life of faith, having faith only in these, and trusting to them for sure salvation. The church, (properly understood,) gives you the true view of these ordinances. They are signs and pledges, means and helps, fruitful to those who rightly use them, binding rites, (although they might not be efficacious,) because commanded by divine authority, as pledges of love, they should stimulate affection, as means of grace, they should encourage effort, as tokens of participation in the inheritance of the ransomed, they should prompt the heir to strive to make his calling sure.

The holy affections cherished by the prayerful use of these means, should abound in all the manifestations of love—works of righteousness, which will be known as fruits of faith in the day of judgment. Let us appeal to you, once more, then,—whatever may be your religious hope, my hearers, and I ask you if you show true faith in Christ, by the sure sign, submission to his will? Examine yourselves. As sinful creatures needing pardon, as repentant sinners seeking pardon, as professed followers of Christ bound to walk in the way which he has marked out, have you listened meekly and submissively to that voice of the Lord which directs you, with authority not to be resisted without sin, and with as much positiveness as it directed the blind man, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam?” We must not lose sight of an important bearing which the text has upon the relation which the subject of Christ’s mercy should sustain towards him, through another divine institution, the ministry, as bonds uniting them in the same communion. Christ founded one church, under one ministry, and he prayed for the unity of that church, that it might be preserved. And it is the duty of every Christian, not only to observe ordinances and cultivate Christian affections, but likewise to receive these ordinances at the hands of a ministry of Christ’s appointment, and in communion with the one holy apostolic church. No one to whom the claims of the church are presented, can be excused before God, for neglecting them. Truth and order alike spring from God, and he is a bold man who wilfully sets himself against either. And he is a guilty man who holds in low estimation any divine appointment. The Holy Scriptures were given to the church. The church was not made by man’s device, with the help of the scrip-

tures, according to private interpretation. In these days men are slow to understand these things. Nevertheless, they must be taught, as a part of the system of religion which Christ has set forth. And we pray, in the words of Christ, that all who profess to be his followers "may be one," that the world may know that God hath sent him to be the Saviour of the world.

SERMON X.

“God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.”
2 COR. V. 19.

THE apostle, having in the foregoing part of the chapter set forth in strong terms his assured hope of eternal glory, passes to the brief consideration of the final judgment at the tribunal of Christ, before which all must appear, “that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” Knowing this, which he calls “the terror of the Lord,” he is careful to keep a good conscience, not only by living as a new creature in Christ, in conformity to the principles of his high calling, but also by the faithful exercise of his ministry, in seeking those who are wandering from God, to bring them back to love and obedience. The earnest striving which he manifested in the cause, was prompted, too, by the constraining love of Christ, whose vicarious sacrifice bound all those who are redeemed by it to a life of devotion to his service. Old things are passed away to the redeemed in Christ, and all things are become new. And all these new things—the spiritual privileges, joys, and hopes of the adoption through Christ, “are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath committed unto us the ministry of reconciliation, to wit: That God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.” Our text suggests these three points for consideration.

1. The reconciliation referred to by the apostle.
2. The fitness of Christ to be a Mediator, for the purpose of effecting it.

3. The ministry by which the benefits of the reconciliation are made available for individual salvation.

1st. In considering the reconciliation referred to, we are led to some general reflections upon the state of mind in which such subjects should ever be approached. In all religious matters we must regard ourselves as children, coming to the holy Scriptures in a submissive and docile spirit, to be taught what we cannot know of ourselves. For it must be granted, that if man did not need a revelation from God to teach him the way of salvation, or his religious condition and his religious duty, no revelation would be given. A revelation being given, man must learn from it the truth in regard to such matters. It is great folly and presumption to admit the revelation, and yet think and act as if nothing had been revealed. If what purports to be a revelation from God contradict our actual knowledge, this will be so much evidence that it is not a true revelation. But if it be proved true, we must not refuse to hear it, because it tells us much that may astonish us. It will not do, for example, for those who are called to embrace the Christian doctrines of natural sinfulness—the need of redemption, and the actual mediation of a Saviour, to ask, by the way of excusing compliance, “What was God’s purpose in creating man? And why did he not create man with power to keep himself in possession of purity and happiness?” These are questions which go beyond all that we can know. God only could inform us, and that he could do only by a special revelation, which he has not done. We have a right to conclude from the attributes of God, that he would not create an intelligent being for any thing but good. If he did create man for any thing else, man owes him no thanks, no love, no sense of religion. And if man is now just what God made him, if he is obeying in all things a law originally planted within him, that is, if he has not swerved from God by wayward impulses, he is surely guiltless in God’s sight. God can demand no more of him. But if he is a fallen creature, if he has forsaken a law once given him, lost his natural innocence, and separated himself from God by his own wilful disobedience, then he needs some Mediator between himself and God; some instrumentality by which he may obtain God’s favour, and a restoration to purity. His own reason, if he will reflect upon his character and condition, may concur with the word of divine reve-

lation, in teaching man his guilt, his helplessness, and his need of a Mediator. But whether so or not, if a blinded conscience have been wont to whisper smooth and false things to his soul, and he do not admit his real condition, the word of God must determine, without appeal, whether there be a controversy between himself and his creatures, what that controversy is, and how it can be settled. Supposing that there has been a lapse from original innocence—a fall from righteousness through transgression of God's law—causing guilt, and weakness and offensiveness to God, man needs a Mediator, qualified to meet the demands of God, and the wants of man. Now there can be no religion without a sense of want and danger on the part of man, and a hope of propitiating God's favour. This sense of want and danger, leads to the offering of prayer and sacrifice, even by the heathen. But the hope of propitiating God's favour can have no sure ground but the testimony of God's word. And this word declares both the fall of man from original purity and innocence, and his recovery by the intervention of a Mediator. It behooves man to avail himself of the testimony of God's word, that he may both learn the way, and secure the means of salvation. The word of God declares that man is at enmity with God, and that God has, in mercy, provided a way of reconciliation. Both the enmity and the reconciliation are declared in various passages of holy writ. Guilt, which calls for punishment, sin which needs atonement, aversion to God's law, which can only be overcome by a spiritual influence of powerful suaveness, are charged upon man by the word of God, which sets forth an expiation for sin through the blood of Jesus, and the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, through his prevailing intercession.

The atonement for sin was offered by our Lord Jesus Christ, who says plainly in reference to his necessary mediation, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me"—and "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but (should) have everlasting life." And how great soever may be our efforts to secure our salvation, we must abide by the apostolic testimony, that "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." And we are assured by like testimony, that "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin"—he is the propitiation

for the sin of all the world. "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood." "God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." "But now, in Christ Jesus, ye, who sometime were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ." These are some of the many texts, taken from the apostolic writings, which set forth the enmity of man to God, and his reconciliation through Christ. Now, keeping to this testimony, we may properly and profitably consider,—

2dly. The fitness of our Lord Jesus Christ to be the Mediator between God and man. On this point we may remark that to be a Mediator it is requisite that the person undertaking the office should be able to represent both parties. The offering which a mere man could make to God by way of propitiation, would be of no avail—for his own sin is more than he could expiate. The law of God declares "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Transgression of the law made man liable to the full penalty; God's justice demanded the death of the offender, without mercy; death temporal and eternal. How then could man be a substitute for man? The substitute must be capable of suffering and overcoming death,—of satisfying God's law by submission to the penalty in man's stead, and giving man a new trial with a well grounded hope of final acceptance with God. The only begotten Son of God was the competent and the ordained substitute, who, being God, took our nature upon him, "that through death he might destroy death, and him that had the power of" it. What a sufficient High Priest have we, who have laid hold on the redemption through Christ Jesus, the only begotten Son of God? The apostle, writing to the Hebrews, expatiates upon this thought, in these words, "Wherefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto his brethren; that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." Here is a recognition of the two-fold mediation of the Saviour, the redemption through an atoning sacrifice, and the effectual help through the Holy Spirit, shielding from the assaults of the great tempter.

The reconciliation with God, through the sufferings of a sinless substitute, was necessary to man's salvation. For salvation requires the remission of sins: and by God's decree, there can be "no remission without shedding of blood"—our only Redeemer must be offered up "as a lamb for sacrifice." Christ, ordained of God in the beginning, shadowed forth by the sacrifices of the Jewish ritual, and exhibited to the world in the meek and lowly Jesus, God dwelling in the flesh, in our stead suffered the penalty of the law, submitted to death for us; and having overcome death by virtue of his divine nature, has given to all who will put their trust in him, assurance of pardon, and of a resurrection to everlasting life. Now, with a full appreciation of the character of our great Mediator, and devout thankfulness for the perfect reconciliation through the Godhead in Christ, let us consider,—

3dly. The ministry of reconciliation, which God hath committed unto the apostles. The church, with its divine ordinances and ministry, is by implication included in the last clause of the text. "To us," says the apostle, "God hath committed the word of reconciliation,"—in the previous verse, he says "the ministry of reconciliation." That is, "He hath given to us authority and commandment, to set forth to sinful men the privileges of redemption, and the means by which they are made available." We bring to men a message from God, alluding to the great commission given by Christ to the chosen apostles, as recorded by St. Matthew, "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe.... whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." The preaching of the word was not to be, and cannot properly be, separated from the making disciples of all men, through the ministration of baptism, in the name of the Holy Trinity. This was the rite by which, on profession of faith in the divine Redeemer, men were to be made members of the church of Christ. Forgiveness of sins was originally *sealed* in the rite of baptism—which was the seal of God's covenant in Christ, and, at the same time, a mark of union with the church. Hence there was *no assurance* of forgiveness apart from the church of Christ. The apostles ad-

hered closely to the terms of the commission, and always taught the convicted sinners, who cried out, "What shall we do to be saved?"—the necessity of baptism, as well as of faith. St. Paul himself, although converted to the Christian religion by a miraculous vision of Christ, and designated as an apostle of the faith which he had persecuted, was thus addressed by Ananias, to whom he was sent for instruction, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." It is certain that the first preachers of the gospel, or glad tidings of reconciliation with God, wrought by Christ Jesus our Lord, did urge sinners to come into the church, which they were ordained to establish, for that forgiveness of sins, which was secured by his effectual mediation. Sinners were urged to come penitent and believing, these were requisite conditions,—but they must come to Christ's fold, and there receive the full assurance of pardon. The same divine authority which committed to the apostles the word, or message of reconciliation, that is, authority to declare in Christ's name, that the blood of propitiation had been offered, also commanded them "to make disciples" of all who were willing to receive the benefit of that reconciliation, by baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. As then the church was the appointed channel of the grace of redemption, so it was a sure channel, to all who had the requisite qualifications for admission. When, therefore, the command to the convicted sinner, looking for a way of return to God's favour, was "Repent of your sins, and be baptized in the name of Christ, believing in him as the Divine Redeemer," an assurance went with it, that to every one coming to baptism with the right spirit, and due preparation of heart, the forgiveness of sins was pledged in that ordinance of Christ. To the church are the promises sealed—"the church of God," which, as the apostle says to the elders of Ephesus, "He hath purchased with his own blood." So he writes to the Ephesians. "Even as Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." And with this agrees the whole tenor of apostolic writing. When the hearts of the multitude were moved by the first sermon of St. Peter, to cry out for instruction in the way of salvation, the emphatic answer was, "Repent, and be baptized,

every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins."

This is the authorized teaching of the Christian ministry, that there is, in every right baptism, an assurance to the faithful recipient of the forgiveness of all sins committed before baptism. There is no prospective pledge, except of grace to help all honest and prayerful striving to overcome temptation. The member of the church, though pardoned and justified before God, through faith in Christ, is still a frail mortal, liable to sin. But if, through the frailty which yields to besetting temptations he should offend,—(and "there is no man that sinneth not;") he has "an advocate with the Father," he has "one mighty to save," on whom he can lean for support, and call for help. Sincere repentance, prompting to the use of the means of grace given in the church, will avail to the true avowed and sealed believer, confessing his short-comings. The word of God, opened by the Holy Spirit to his prayerful search, the holy communion of the body and blood of Christ, in which the precious promises of God are set forth renewedly in the emblems of an effectual sacrifice, the declaration of absolution in the daily office of common prayer,—all these helps are parts of that provision, within the church, for the spiritual healing and support—the re-assurance of the meek and faltering disciple of Christ. And the pious breathing of the heart-felt prayer, "Cleanse thou my secret faults, O Lord, and make me pure within," will be heard and accepted by a covenant God. The word of God, and the ordinances of Christ are still committed to a ministry of his own appointment, and they can truly say with St. Paul—"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." And how powerful should this beseeching be? By the greatness and perfectness of the redemption wrought for man—(for God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself,—God the Son, in human nature, bearing our sins and carrying our transgressions, that we through his sufferings might be delivered from eternal wrath, and be made heirs of everlasting glory.)—by this great and glorious redemption, the ministers of Christ may surely challenge the love and devotion of sinful men. To us, my hearers, is committed this word of reconciliation—this message of God's grace to fallen man, in Christ's name, and by his authority, we

make known to you the solemn truths—that being under condemnation by the law of God, Christ has offered a sacrifice by which you may be freed from this condemnation, which would else cleave to your soul forever—that being corrupt and frail by nature, and having no inherent power to rise to works of righteousness, the Holy Spirit is offered through Christ's mediation, as the quickening power by which you may be enabled to do works acceptable to God—that being wanderers from God, Christ has opened his fold, the church, and invited you to enter it, and there receive pledges of forgiveness of sins, of grace to help your holy striving, and of his abiding love for you as God's children by adoption. Now with the offer of such abundant and manifold mercy in Christ Jesus, earnestly and authoritatively urged upon you, hesitate not to accept it for your soul's salvation. Believe the assurance of our text, and through repentance and submission to baptism, receive that reconciliation with God which will open to you the gate of heaven. Having in the rite of admission to the church, exchanged pledges with Christ in a covenant of pardon and grace on his part, and of faith, repentance and devout following of Christ on your part, give yourselves to the work of building up Christ's kingdom, in your own hearts first, and then in the world, by holy living, to his glory, and your own well being, in this world and in the world to come. Feed on Christ in the holy sacrament of the supper, and as you therein offer "the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving," and the prayer that "your sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and your souls washed in his most precious blood," so may you ever remember that, being members of the body of Christ, you bring a stain upon his body, by any known and indulged impurity in the members, that is, in your hearts and lives.

May God bring you all, through repentance and faith, to a covenant union with Christ, and sustain you by his grace in the work of preparation, by holy living, for the glorious inheritance of the sons of God in the kingdom of heaven.

SERMON XI.

“Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And He said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.”—LUKE vii. 47, 48.

THESE words, which in themselves have much material for thoughtful consideration, subtle inquiry, and practical comment, bring before us, by force of close connexion, our Lord’s interesting but difficult parable of the two debtors. The occasion and the circumstantial drapery of this parable arrest while they will surely reward our attention. The beautiful and appropriate scenery lends much support to the dramatic effect of the representation, from which we purpose to draw lessons of wisdom and godly counsel.

The parable is thus introduced: “And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee’s house, and sat down to meat. And behold, a woman in the city, who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster-box of ointment, and stood at his feet, behind him, weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now, when the Pharisee who had bidden him saw it, he spoke within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who, and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him; for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering, said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor who had two debtors, the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave

them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thy house, thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss; but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore, I say unto thee, Her sins which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven." In the text, then, we have our Lord's application of his parable, the penitent and loving woman being the greater, and Simon, the self-righteous Pharisee, being the less, of the two debtors.

It will be our object, after a running comment on the incidents of the narrative, to show the justness of the application, and the spiritual instruction which may be derived from the whole matter. Casting our eye at the striking incidents of the parable—the scenery of this sacred dramatic exhibition—we observe the Saviour of men, received as a guest by a courtly, self-loving Pharisee, with none of the usual attentions which mark the presence of a man of high rank—or of high estimation—honoured enough perhaps, in the opinion of his host, by an invitation to his house. As he reclined at table, a woman of notoriously wicked character, we will suppose, came unbidden into the room, and lavished upon him the tokens of love and reverence which are above described. We speak of her as a *notorious sinner*, not that we have any more or other evidence of her character than what this narrative affords. But the Pharisee, as we perceive, pronounced her emphatically a *sinner*; and our Lord said that "her sins were many," though he, who knew all mankind, could have said the same of many, who in their own and in the Pharisee's opinion, were not obnoxious to the charge. To some it may seem strange, that a woman so sinful as to be deemed polluting to the touch of the Saviour,—or of a prophet, as Jesus was reputed to be, should be admitted into Simon's house on such a footing of familiarity. But it was, and is to this day, an eastern custom, for strangers to come into the room where a family, or an invited

party are taking a meal, and seat themselves on benches near the walls, behind the couches placed around the table. These unbidden visitors could reach over and converse with those who were at the table without offence. The journals of travellers in our own day, afford striking proofs of the full keeping of this incident with the custom of the Jews and other eastern nations, as yet unchanged. The custom was noticed at Jerusalem a few years since, by one who dined at the table of a missionary to the Jews from the church of England. But even if the woman in question could not have come in ordinarily unchallenged, there must have been an earnestness of purpose, and an eagerness of desire, under the prompting of a sense of spiritual want, and a true appreciation of the character of Jesus, as the minister of God to mankind, in all that could heal, comfort, and save, which would break through the common barriers to free social intercourse. But the sinful woman *was there*, in the house of the Pharisee, and we have seen that she might be there without any implied reproach to his consistency of character. Let us now look at the nice touches of a master's hand, in the picture presented to us. The incidents which follow demand a close attention. The Pharisee, whose notions of ceremonial purity were offended by the near approach of the woman to Jesus, held this reasoning with himself, in regard to the claims of Jesus to reverence.—“This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who, and what manner of woman this is, that toucheth him—for she is a sinner.” We shall readily perceive the dilemma to which the Pharisee intended to bring his guest, if we consider the common belief of the Jews, that the “discerning of spirits” was a sure mark of divine inspiration.—This was the seal of every prophet's calling, and especially of the Messiah's mission. And we find many proofs and illustrations of this prevailing notion.—Thus when Jesus spake to Nathaniel as if he knew him well, the Israelite's first exclamation of surprise was, “Whence knowest thou me?” But on reflection, he concluded that one who had given such undoubted evidence of divine inspiration, must be the expected Messiah, and he testified his belief, in the prompt declaration, “Thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel!” So the Samaritan woman whom Jesus met at the well of Sychar and astonished with his familiar acquaintance with her history, called to her friends and said, “Come and see a man

who told me all things which ever I did. Is not this the Christ?"

Agreeably to this popular belief, the Pharisee argued, "If this man were a prophet, he would know that the touch of this woman is polluting. If he does not know it, he is not a prophet; and if he does know it, and yet allows it, he does not keep the law, and has not a prophet's holiness."

Now observe how well Jesus vindicates his claims. He proves his power to discern thoughts, by reading what is passing in the mind of the Pharisee, whom he rebukes for his self-righteous spirit. Interrupting the train of thought, so reproachful to himself, Jesus said, "Simon, I have somewhat to say to thee." Simon answered, (for he had not so far settled the question of his guest's claim to reverence, as to refuse all tokens of respect,) "Master, say on."

With this expressed encouragement, Jesus uttered the parable which follows. "There was a certain creditor who had two debtors; the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged."

Then, contrasting the devotion of the sinful woman, with the Pharisee's neglect and indifference, he uttered the words of our text, "Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven."

It is almost needless to say, by way of explanation, that in this parable, God is the creditor, and man the debtor; the different sums named being the comparative guilt, or rather, sense of guilt, of different individuals. And the practical teaching of a general character is, that gratitude for mercies and favours should be proportioned to the greatness of the mercies and favours received; while the glancing rebuke of a personal application was meant for the self-righteous man, who gave occasion for the parable.

The two debtors were promptly and freely released from their debts of unequal amount; and our Lord said that Simon

judged rightly, when he thought that he who owed the most would feel the most gratitude and love. And in accordance with this, it is inferred that of two sinners, both freely forgiven, the one who had the greatest weight of acknowledged sin, would manifest the greatest measure of grateful love.

The doctrinal teaching here should be carefully heeded, which is truly this—that the gratuitous forgiveness of sin, is the *cause* of the love felt and expressed; and not, as it may seem, that love caused the forgiveness. The words of our text seem to convey the latter doctrine. “Her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much.” “For,” does not mean “because,” in this passage, but rather “therefore.” The particle conjunctives which are translated “*for*,” “*because*,” and “*therefore*,” are often used interchangeably in the New Testament. The true teaching of the text may be fully ascertained by reference to the parting words of Jesus to the penitent and loving woman,—“Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.”

The love which prompted such lavish tenderness and unwonted tokens of high estimation, was the expression of her faith in the power and willingness of Jesus to pardon the sins of which she was conscious and deeply repentant. The prostration which betokened homage and self-unworthiness, the anointing of the feet of Him whose head she presumed not to touch,—the wiping of his feet with her hair, by which act she signified that the difference of level between them was as great as she could express, and that her highest adornment was scarcely a fit instrument for the lowest office which she could perform in his service—all this was the outward expression of repentance for sin, and faith in the divine Mediator, through whom forgiveness could be obtained.

It must be observed here, that it was not an assurance of pardon, which caused all these demonstrations of love; for, unless Jesus had on some former occasion spoken words of comfort to this woman,—(of which we have no intimation in the Scriptures)—she did not know that her sins were forgiven, until after this outpouring of tender devotion.

It was not till after Jesus had commented upon her evidences of love,—(which seemed to spring from deep sorrow for sin, as well as an earnest desire to be forgiven by him whom she re-

garded with veneration as the Messiah,)—that he mentioned the fact, that her sins were forgiven, and then formally declared her pardon, and her salvation through faith.

Now it is a doctrine of the Gospel, that “faith worketh by love.” And so here, inasmuch as the love which the woman manifested was a proof, and an expression of her faith, it might be properly said, in a popular sense,—that love was the cause of her forgiveness. But the whole matter is settled by the formal declaration of our Lord, “Thy faith hath saved thee.” Faith was the condition of salvation in this case, as in all cases, according to the appointment of God—faith in the promised Redeemer, who was sent in due time to accomplish the foreordained work of man’s deliverance.

Indeed we may perceive that love was not the cause of justification to the woman who had many sins to be forgiven, by the very structure of the sentence which completes the antithesis. For if such were the case, it would read, “But he who loveth little, to the same little is forgiven.” Whereas it reads, “To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.” Since the assurance of forgiveness was not the cause of the great love ascribed to the woman, and yet, (if the word “*for*,” be taken as equivalent to “*therefore*,”) a sense of forgiveness must have been the strong motive, we have another view of the subject, which commends itself to our notice. And on this point we are prompted to ask—what is it which draws the heart of man towards God? It is the keen sense of the purity of a broken law, and of the holiness of God; a deep and tender sorrow for the offence of transgression—and a belief in the willingness of God to receive the true penitent—it is this exercise of an awakened heart, which draws it towards God by the bands of love. It is the clinging of faith to the robe of the Saviour, out of whom a virtue goes for the healing of the soul’s wounds, which opens the fountain of love. The yearning of the prodigal for the home from which he strayed, and for the love which he has spurned, is a true representation of the sinner’s sense of desolation in his state of estrangement from God—which denotes the budding of faith. An instinctive consciousness of God’s willingness to pardon may be blended with the first awakening of penitence. With the deep and strong expression of sorrow

and love in the sinful soul towards a God of love, there must be a corresponding conviction, founded on a just appreciation of God's mercy, that the acknowledged sin will be forgiven. This manifestation of faith was seen in the conduct of the woman in the parable before us,—and it was very acceptable to the Saviour.

So is every such expression of faith an acceptable offering in the sight of God. The longing for pardon and restoration to God's favour because sin cannot be endured on account of its being a barrier to his love, is the state of mind most pleasing in God's sight—and is the surest guarantee of a lively and enduring faith.

This is the faith which we would see in all who are conscious of sinfulness which is offensive to God. The dread of divine retribution for wickedness may drive the sinner to a confession, as to a shield from vengeance. But the fruits of that confession, put forth in the life of the fear-stricken sinner, will last no longer than the quaking of the soul at the uplifting of the rod of wrath. True and lasting devotion is grounded in the deep sense of grateful recognition of the claims of a heavenly Father, to the love of his ransomed children. It is the heart's offering of love to Him who so loved us, that he gave himself for us—the outpouring of gratitude softened into tenderness, by sorrow for transgression. This will lead to holy living, as the means of sustaining a near intercourse with God—of enjoying his love as well as testifying love for him.

Such is the design and the reward of true faith. And now, my hearers, has the true teaching of this parable been comprehended by you, and applied to your own souls? Gladly would we help you to perceive the difference of condition between the woman who “was a great sinner,” in her own sight, and the Pharisee who was so much concerned about her sins, as to overlook his own. And we would surely commend to you the deep penitence, and the tender expression of love, which marked her consciousness of sin, as well as her trust in the mercy of a Saviour, in preference to the cool self-complacency of the man who could say in his heart, in spite of these demonstrations of sorrow, and faith, “Stand back, for I am holier than thou!”

What is the estimate that you have made of the Saviour's love? It will correspond with your sense of sin which needs

his atoning mercy, and your faith in his promises of grace. If you do not recognise his claim to your true and lasting devotion, is it because you do not acknowledge your need of pardoning mercy? or, like Simon, doubt whether he be the divine Redeemer?

If not conscious of sin, you must have very inadequate conceptions of the holiness of God, and the strict purity of his law—or failed to look closely at your own hearts. Sin may be too intimately associated with pleasure to appear sin—or you may care so little about a future state of existence, that you have never examined yourselves by the light of God's word.

Either condition is one of great peril, in which you should no longer rest. Open your minds and your hearts to the truths of divine revelation. And if those truths shall so smite you, as to bring you to low prostration at the feet of a merciful Saviour, in a meek, sorrowful, and repentant state, be assured that your demonstrations of faith in the expressions of love mingled with penitence, may be hailed as tokens of that Saviour's pardoning mercy, echoing in the chambers of your heart his cheering words, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

SERMON XII.

“And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”—Acts ii. 47.

THERE is much looseness of language, and much confusion of thought on the subject of church relations. We often hear persons who are religiously affected speak of joining a church. And many are asked, while under such a sense of religious obligation as requires a profession of faith, What church will you join?—with manifest allusion to the various communions of Christian worshippers that are established among us. Now we should not object to this use of the word “church” by a sort of tacit agreement made to suit the circumstances of the present age of Christianity, if it did not lead to the perversion of a very important truth of scripture, and to a misrepresentation of those who hold it. They who so use the word complain of those who speak of the church, as if they arrogated to themselves a privilege not warranted by holy scripture, when they apply the term to their own communion. But this is strictly in accordance with the usage of scripture, which represents the followers of Christ as joined together in one fellowship, called always the church, and likened to a body, or a building, having many members or parts knit together closely, Christ being the head or the corner-stone. The unity of the church is constantly asserted in the New Testament as a principle well established, one which was shadowed forth by types in the Mosaic dispensation, and intimated clearly in the earliest revelations of God to man. Search the scriptures, and see if they speak of believers in Christ, but as members of one body, or living stones of one spiritual temple. Where do you find any, the least, intimation of a state of things that would justify a believer in hesitating about the fellowship with which he should be

associated, or in asking what church he should join? The only question in those days was, whether the Christian system should be recognised, and the Jewish be forsaken as one that was superseded. If Jesus was received as the Christ, then union with his church was regarded as a matter of course, all being alike required to show their submission to his authority by receiving baptism in his name, at the hands of his chosen ministers. This is proved by the whole current of testimony afforded by the history of the Acts of the Apostles. The effect of the first preaching of the apostles is thus declared: "Then they that gladly received the word were baptized, and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." This is the first time that the church is spoken of in the scriptures as a body already organized, and it is here mentioned as the body of believers in Jesus, under the ministry and authority of his apostles. These were the society to which the converts to Christianity were added, and these constituted the church to which the Lord added daily such as should be saved. All who were of the church continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship. The epistles are written to the church of God in the several cities and countries, where it has been established: and the Christians at Corinth are reprov'd for schism, because they had allowed themselves to be led away by men calling themselves apostles from the common fold of Christ. We are struck, on opening the Acts of the Apostles with such notices as these, of a persecution arising against "the church," of Saul making havoc of "the church," of prayer being made by Peter for "the church," and of Herod vexing certain of "the church." All this shows one organized body of believers, having a common faith, common ordinances, and a common ministerial authority and government. We do indeed read of churches, but only in the sense in which we now use the expression, when we speak of many congregations of the same communion, as when we say there are 1600 Episcopal churches in the United States, meaning that there are so many separate parishes in union with the (Episcopal) church. We read that the churches had rest throughout Judea—that the churches were

established in the faith, and that Paul went throughout Syria confirming “the churches.” All this is perfectly consistent and intelligible. It shows a multitude of congregations in one communion, all under the control of the apostles, by whom they were visited and confirmed in the common faith. This is very obvious; for how could the churches be established in the faith, if they all had not the same faith? Or how could Paul confirm churches that were not in fellowship with him? Unity of communion is perfectly consistent with plurality of congregations:—it is now, as all admit, and it was then. And this was in the days of the apostles an element of the church. Shall we then be thought unreasonable when we speak of the church in connexion with our Christian privileges—not the church in contradistinction to a church, but *the* church? Can there be churches now that are not in union with *the* church, any more than there could be in the days of the first apostles of Christ? Must not all Christian societies retain both the doctrine and the fellowship of the apostles, in order to be of the one fold—the church—which is the body of Christ? Shall we be blamed for cleaving closely to scripture? That is our appeal. There we would have all go for the true foundation of their claims. Holy Scripture every where proclaims the unity of the church. Let us view it as it is presented under the most common image, “a body.”

St. Paul says to the Ephesians (i. 22, 23,) speaking of Christ, that “God hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” And to the Colossians, he says, “He is the Head of the body, the church;” and in another place we find this language, “Holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.” So to the Romans, “We being many are one body in Christ.” And to the Corinthians, “As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” And again, “Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.” To the Ephesians again he says, “There is one body and one

Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling—one Lord, one faith, one baptism.” “And He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” And further on in the same passage, “But speaking the truth in love may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, even Christ; from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” And once more to the Romans, “As we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office, so we being many, are one body in Christ; and every one members one of another.” Throughout these passages and others like them, St. Paul shadows forth the church under the figure of a body, of which the several associated believers are members, all united under one and the same Head, even Christ. The oneness of the church is just as certain as that of the human body, which consisting of many members having different offices, but all moved and regulated by one head, is but one body. In this well organized body the ministry performed a necessary part, being as it were the “spinal chord” through which the members were connected with the Head. This ministry was of divine appointment, as appears from the same word of inspiration which describes the structure of the church, as that of a body. Speaking of the diversity of gifts and operations in this body, the Spirit being given to each man for his several ministry, St. Paul says, “For God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles,” &c., &c. “Are all apostles? Are all prophets?” Here we have proof that the ordaining of the men who should be ministers of the church, like the gift of miracles, was God’s own work. So in another place we read, “Wherefore He saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some pastors and teachers, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” This fact, that the ministry is of divine origin and authority, here distinctly asserted, is made very obvious in all the history of the church contained in the New Testament.

Christ himself ordained twelve apostles—one was a traitor. The eleven supplied the vacancy by the choice of Matthias, after prayer for direction, who should succeed to his apostolic powers. Then they ordained elders in every church. St. Paul, who received a direct call from Jesus after his ascension, charges the elders of the churches of Asia, to feed the flock of God over which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers; and lays hands on Timothy and Titus, giving them the oversight of Ephesus and Crete respectively, and providing for the multiplication and succession of pastors through their ordaining power.

Thus we see that the same divine power which ordained the sacraments as means of grace, and signs of favour, also ordained the ministry to whom these sacraments were committed. And they were the bond which knit together the believers in one visible communion, as members of one body. And to this one body, the church, "The Lord added daily such as should be saved." The increase of the church was owing to the same divine power which gave it being. The Lord made it, and the Lord filled it. The same divine Saviour who gave himself a ransom for sinners, proclaimed the gospel of salvation to all who should believe in him, pledging his word to the church, by signs and seals, which should be preserved in the church forever. The gospel never was designed to be preached independently of the church—nor can it be, for the church is part of the gospel. Union with it was commanded as one of the conditions of salvation, on the first preaching of salvation through Christ. Baptism was the rite of admission to the church of Christ, and they to whom Christ was preached as the Saviour, were commanded to "repent and be baptized for the remission of sins." Listen to St. Peter, when, on the day of Pentecost, many were pricked in their hearts and inquired "what they must do to be saved. Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. Then they that gladly received the word were baptized, and the same day there were added to them about three thousand souls." These three thousand were joined to the church at this time, and joined by baptism, as is clear from what follows: "And they continued in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship," (which were the marks of the church;) "and the Lord added daily to the church such as should be saved."

Here then we see that the church originally consisted of those believers in Christ who were baptized in his name by his chosen ministers, and continued to hold the doctrines and the fellowship of these first ministers, receiving truth from their lips and the ordinances at their hands.

This was the holy apostolic church, designed by its Divine Lord to be catholic or universal, and to be perpetual; that is, not to be confined to one people, the Jews, who were the church of God, but to include all nations, as many as the Lord should call, and not, like the Jewish church, to be superseded by another, but to continue forever. In this church universal and perpetual, we believe. And we mean to assert our belief in it when we say in the Apostles' creed, read at our morning and evening service, "I believe in the Holy Catholic church." Not as many suppose, that we mean to identify ourselves with the church of Rome, which is commonly called "the catholic church," as if it had an exclusive claim to the title. We mean no such thing. The word "catholic" applies to the whole apostolic church, which is divided into several branches; there is the Greek, the English, the American, and the Roman branch. Nor should we be suspected of any undue sympathy with Rome, because we believe in the Holy Catholic church, any more than other communions of Christians who make the same profession of belief. (See Presbyterian Confession of Faith.) The Wesleyan Methodists profess the same creed with the church of England. Now wherein do we differ from them in our definition of the church? Our 19th article says, "The visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, i. e. men who believe in Christ—in the which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly administered according to Christ's ordinance in all those things that are of necessity requisite to the same." The 13th article, as set forth in the Methodist book of discipline, is a copy of our own. (See also form of ordination.)

The Presbyterian Confession says, "The visible church, (which is also catholic or universal,) consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children, and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation." "Unto this catholic visible church, Christ hath given

the ministry, oracles and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints in this life, to the end of the world." And this is supported by a proof text from Ephesians, which we have before quoted, "God gave some apostles," &c., iv. 11-13. The same passage is read as authority in the epistle prescribed in the form of ordaining an elder in the Methodist book of doctrines and discipline. And in the form of ordaining a bishop (so called) in the same book, we find this claim of a divinely bestowed power to confer the authority to minister in the church of God—(the bishop ordaining, with the elders laying on hands,) "Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a bishop in the church of God, now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. And remember that thou stir up the grace of God which is given thee by this imposition of our hands."

. There is nothing, surely, in our articles stronger than in the others just quoted on the subject of the catholicity and divine origin of the church. All equally insist on the preaching of the pure word of God, as once delivered to the saints, and the due administration of the sacraments according to Christ's ordinance to a congregation of believers. The question, and the only one between us, must be, what is true doctrine? and what is a due administration of the sacraments? But this we will not now attempt to settle. We would confine our attention to the fact that we, in common with most Christian communions, regard the church as a society of believers in Christ, organized under a ministry of divine appointment, and having the sacraments administered according to Christ's ordinance. And just such a society we find established in the days of the first apostles, called the church, and having various congregations, all in fellowship with the apostles, and all receiving the same doctrines. And we maintain that in order to be entitled to call ourselves and the communion to which we belong, members of the church, we must have the same doctrines and ordinances that the first Christians had, and be in fellowship with the apostles, through the pervading bond of a ministry derived from them, that is, through the apostolical succession. That we have this succession, this connecting bond, we can distinctly prove, as clearly as we prove the divine origin of our religion.

We received our ministry through the church of England, our first bishops having been consecrated in England, by the archbishop of Canterbury, the primate of that church. And the church of England can trace the succession of her bishops step by step to the apostles of Christ. By virtue of that connexion the Protestant Episcopal church in this country, having true doctrine and the sacraments of Christ duly administered, has its title to fellowship with the one holy apostolic church fully established.

Now, for asserting our belief in the apostolic succession, we are sometimes derided and assailed with reproach, by those, too, who practically rely on that succession for their own ministry. All who practise ordination as a necessary title to the Christian ministry, do virtually claim a succession of authoritative acts of separation for the work of the ministry, from those to whom Christ gave the original commission. They surely do, if their ceremony of ordination means any thing, if it is not a miserable pretence and a contemptible mockery of a divine institution. The present ministers of the denominations whose standards we have quoted, received their authority to preach the word, and administer the sacraments of Christ, by the laying on of hands of other ministers, who received their authority by a like ceremony from men ordained by others, and they from others further up the line. Now where does the line stop? With any man self-appointed? If so, what virtue had the ceremony of ordination? If it does not stop there, does it not reach, in their view, to the original source of authority, Christ himself, through his first ministers? Certainly. They do so view the matter. Their ordination is a proof of it. They do set up the principle of the apostolic succession, and act on it. And the only issue between them and us is, whether the succession could be transmitted in the line of Presbyters, which we call the second order of the ministry, or in the line of Bishops only, which we call the first or highest order.

The question is one of fact, therefore, and to be settled by reference to Scripture and the primitive church. Both Scripture and the primitive church after the days of the apostles, testify that the power of ordination was limited to the apostles, and those whom they appointed to succeed them, now called bishops.

When, therefore, we claim to be a true branch of the holy catholic

church, on the grounds here stated, let us not be derided or reproached, especially by those who make the like claim, and who have no valid ministry on their own principles, unless the claim be supported. We mean by apostolical succession, just what all who have ordained ministers receiving their authority from those ordained before them in regular order, mean, when they insist on this ordination before they will recognise a man as a minister; viz., authority to exercise the ministry in the church of Christ, derived from Christ, through the laying on of hands by men appointed by him.

Now the last link in the upward chain of derived authority must be the apostles themselves, or else some man of later origin having a special commission from Christ to appoint a ministry. Any view of such ordination, which does not lead to one of these conclusions, makes it appear either a miserable farce, or a contemptible cheat. Now either we all alike have this succession through the hands of Presbyters, supposing them authorized to convey it, (for if they are, then we who claim it through Bishops must have it, Bishops being Presbyters ordained to a higher office, the less being contained in the greater) and in this case an attempt to overthrow our claim would be suicidal to themselves, or only those who have Episcopal ordinations can prove their claim to apostolic authority by ordinary transmission, leaving all others to the questionable title derived from especial commission.

Here then we stand:—Either there is no derived authority from Christ to exercise the ministry; and hence no visible church, (for there can be no church without a ministry,) or we have it, either alone or in common with others not under Episcopal regimen; for if they have it, we have our Bishops, having at least equal authority with their ministers, having the rank of Bishop in addition to that of Presbyter. If they have the ministerial authority regularly transmitted, we surely have—and we may have it, though they have it not.

We can, therefore, prove our soundness in doctrine, and our fellowship with the apostles, and hence our rightful claim to be part of the church to which Christ gave the word of promise, and the sacraments as pledges of his love, and means of receiving his grace. And hence we may comfort ourselves with the assurance that we have all the privileges which Christ vouchsafed to grant to his

church. These privileges are of immense consequence. Would that they were duly appreciated by all who call themselves Christians! It is with a view to bring them into higher estimation, that we make them the subject of discourse. "The confidence of a certain faith," is a blessing which we are not so churlish as to keep to ourselves, when there are so many with whom we might share it. And the honour of Christ and of his holy religion, demands that we should seek to extend his church in all its integrity. For when its sacred and wholesome institutions are rejected, there is no limit to the wildness of fanaticism.

Even if we did not regard the church as a positive institution of our Lord, as much so as any of his ordinances, we should feel bound to urge it upon the conscience of every one calling himself a Christian, as a conservative power, necessary in our age and country, to protect us from the dangers of religious extravagance. We need not go far back into history, or to a very great distance from our own neighbourhood, for illustrations of this position. Few of us need be told how mischievous in their tendency are those wild exhibitions of religious excitement, which are so frequent in this country. Their results too plainly show their tendency. The sirocco generally leaves traces of its progress that are not to be mistaken.

Against these evils we present the church as a barrier, for they have evidently grown out of a departure from the restraints of church principles and of church authority. Schemes of man's device, when put in the place of what God has established, must always do mischief. When the ordinances of Christ, which are the proper means of promoting religion, and the fit medium of expressing it, are wilfully or heedlessly rejected—the religion which bears the name of Christ, will soon come to have little of Christ but the name. For how should they who despise the sacraments and positive ordinances of Christ, have much regard for his doctrines? What is to prevent a departure from these, which could not preserve those? Alas! we have but to look abroad over the country in any direction, for the most glaring violations of that doctrine which was first delivered to the church by the inspired servants of the Lord, and which the church alone has kept in its integrity. Well may we, therefore, inculcate church principles, when they are so necessary to the maintenance of gospel prin-

ciples. And we can always give this good reason for our conduct, however we may press the claims of the church, that the cause of true religion according to the gospel requires it. For we are bold to say, and we challenge contradiction from any one when we do say it—that the church, (whose cause we feebly advocate,) has more sound scriptural doctrine, as it was given to man by the word of inspiration, than any other communion of professing Christians in the world. How far our members carry out the doctrines professed, in their lives, is another matter. They fall far short of our standards, we doubt not. But we do not intend that others shall take anything by this admission. For we believe there is, at least, quite as much practical godliness within the church, as can be found within the limits of any communion. But we do not urge any comparison with those whose system is less in accordance with the gospel than our own, for it would not be fair, since none can be expected to be above their standard. As we have an ecclesiastical system better calculated than that of all other Christians, to promote godliness, so should we be reasonably expected to surpass all others in holy living.

Compare yourselves, therefore, with your own avowed standards of holiness. Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith which the church holds, and which you profess. Study to frame your life according to the model which she presents to you. Meditate prayerfully upon your baptismal vows. Ask yourselves, in the retirement of the closet, if you have in conscience taken them, and in conscience endeavoured to fulfil them. See if you have received with a devout sense of humility and thankfulness, the sacrament of the supper, and been nourished by the body and blood of Christ. Consider whether you have recognised public prayer in the sanctuary, not only as a divine ordinance, but as a privilege and a blessing. Have you regarded the church and your acknowledged share in its promises and privileges as a reality, something that you can feel and rest upon? And have you lived as if you so regarded them? Ponder these things well—use diligently and faithfully all the means of grace that are given you. Know and feel that you are members of Christ's body, that as you have a holy tie, designed to make you partakers of the divine nature, you may by holy living show yourselves partakers of it, and heirs

through hope, of eternal glory. Do this, for this we have a right to demand of you, as professed believers in the Lord Jesus, baptized into the one body, the church. (As such ye are the temple of the Lord, and the temple of the Lord is holy.) Vital godliness is required of every one who is thus joined with Christ. We do not urge a connexion with the church as a substitute for piety, but as a motive to it, and a divinely appointed means of promoting it. Take such a view of your privileges and your duties, as will lead to that "pureness of living" which was inculcated by Christ our Saviour, that many, seeing the fruits of the gospel in you, may be drawn into the fold of Christ, and so "the Lord may add to the church daily such as should be saved."

SERMON XIII.

“Lord, teach us to pray.”—LUKE xi. 1.

PRAYER is the expression of our wants to Him who can alone relieve them; the acknowledgment of our constant dependence upon the Being who created us. It is a duty so obvious to those who recognise a Supreme Power, that controls every creature, that we may justly charge all who neglect it with practical atheism and gross irreligion. Man cannot go through the world with his eyes open, he cannot reflect upon his condition here, exposed to so many trials, and liable to death at any time, without either ascribing all things to chance, and striving to submit to whatever lot chance may assign to him; or else, feeling an assurance of his subjection to the constant direction and the unlimited authority of a superintending Providence, he finds himself helpless under the chastisements of God, as well as utterly dependent upon his bounty. And while every enjoyment of his life should prompt an expression of gratitude to the Father of all, and the Giver of all good, every sorrow and every temptation should lead to an humble petition for comfort and strength to Him who alone can heal and deliver.

The duty of prayer being obvious, so obvious that little need be said on the subject; it becomes an important inquiry, *how* we shall pray so as to secure the object contemplated, in the most effectual manner. For this purpose, to know how we shall pray, we must do as the first disciples of Jesus did, apply to him for instruction. The New Testament, which plainly and positively enjoins prayer as a duty, informs us that these disciples, on a certain occasion, applied to their Lord, when he had just ceased praying, with the request which forms our text, “Lord, teach us

to pray, as John also taught his disciples." Now a request like this, implies a desire to have some form of prayer to be used in public Christian worship, as well as in the daily private devotions of the closet. They had been for a long time followers of Jesus, and must have been in the habit of praying constantly; the example of their Lord must have been sufficient to urge upon them this duty, even if they had not, as Jews, been wont to engage in such exercises of devotion. But the worship of the Jews consisted mainly of adoration, and praise, and ascriptions of glory to God. They were more inclined to magnify the name of the Most High for his many glorious works, and particularly for his abundant mercies to them as a people, than to offer petitions for his grace to purify their hearts. Indeed they doubted not God's continual favour towards their nation; and self-righteousness, through a supposed fulfilment of the whole law, was so common a failing among them, that supplication for personal, spiritual improvement would not be very frequently or fervently offered. John the Baptist, it appears, who came to reform the Jews, to teach them a more spiritual religion, had taught his disciples to make prayers, probably of a supplicatory character. And the disciples of Jesus wished their Lord, in like manner, to teach them to pray, to give them some comprehensive form of petition, which would express in a proper manner, the ordinary wants of a rational creature, as well as the daily tribute of a pious heart, to the God of all mercy. They desired to be instructed how they should most fitly show their sense of dependence upon divine providence and grace, and their estimation of the character of the God whom they worshipped and served, that they might be at all times prepared to offer worthy homage and supplication. This, we believe, was the object of the disciple, who, in the name of his brethren, said unto Jesus, "Lord, teach us to pray." And never did the twelve make a more judicious request. For the best of men are so imperfect, so ignorant of themselves, and of the character of God, so incapable of rendering a proper service to him, and of expressing themselves according to their necessities, and at the same time according to the claims of God to their reverence and love, that it behooves them to implore divine assistance, lest they be rash "to utter any thing before God" which would be unbecoming an humble mortal. This request was promptly granted by our Lord.

He taught them how to pray, by giving them that form, which is universally known as "The Lord's prayer," and which is justly appealed to as a warrant for prescribed forms of prayer, as well as a model according to which those forms should be composed. He said unto them, "When ye pray, say, Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name." This form is incorporated into our admirable liturgy, which is framed according to this model, consisting of short and comprehensive collects, which breathe the spirit of exalted piety, in language inferior only to that of inspiration. And whatever may be thought of the authority of this prescription of our Lord, whether he intended that his disciples should always use the precise language which he uttered, or only imbibe the spirit of his prayer, and frame their own petitions in such accordance with it as to embody all its substance, it is certain that whoever adopts this form not only shows a proper reverence for the Saviour, who recommended it, but also has the satisfaction of knowing that he cannot offend in word against the majesty of Heaven. We do not intend to set forth the propriety of a liturgy on the ground of divine authority, although we could show that this command of our Lord is positive, that the practice of the Jews in their temple worship before the time of Christ, as well as that of the apostles and the early church, confirms the conclusion that a prescribed form of prayer was enjoined by him. We are contented to remark, at this time, that when the Scripture warrant for the use of it, and the testimony of the ancient church, are considered in connexion with its manifest fitness, it is surprising that a liturgy such as ours should not commend itself to every sober-minded Christian.

But, whatever may be the opinion of the Christian worshipper, in regard to the expediency of a prescribed form of prayer, and however he may reconcile the practice of extemporaneous addresses to the Deity, with the acknowledged duty of common prayer in the sanctuary, and how that can be common prayer which is offered by the minister alone, unknown before, and, of course, often unfollowed by the congregation, we cannot conceive; it is very clear that every Christian is bound to use the Lord's prayer as a summary of his petitions, and a model upon which he forms them. It would be irreverent to neglect such counsel of our Lord, in regard to the mode of approaching the throne of grace, even if it

be regarded as only counsel. And if the Christian desires to pray acceptably to God, (and of course he does,) he may be sure that he will do so, if he will use with sincerity and earnestness the form of address which Christ has dictated. Our Lord thus taught his disciples to pray, not only the twelve, but likewise all who should believe on him through their preaching.

At the same time that he taught them the form of supplication which we have considered, he urged them to be earnest and importunate in prayer, nor to be satisfied with a single petition, though offered with feeling. And this he did in a parable:—"Which of you," said he, "shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him. And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask and it shall be given you."

Now the object and intent of this parable was, to show the advantage of earnest importunity in prayer. If a man will give to an importunate applicant for favours what he would not have given to the same person on a simple request, how much more will God grant the prayer of his creatures, if they seek him often and earnestly? He always listens to their supplications; and though he long withhold an answer yet he will at last vouchsafe to give it. Thus our Lord taught his disciples that they ought not to cease praying until they shall have obtained an answer to their prayers. And this teaching all Christians should lay to heart, for they are liable to be discouraged by the inefficacy of their supplications, when they have besought God but feebly and coldly, with, perhaps, a secret distrust of his faithfulness! They may ask for many things which it would not be expedient for them to receive, or consistent with God's character and will to grant to them. These things they will never obtain, however importunate they may be. But if they ask any thing which it would be proper for God to bestow, or profitable for them to receive, they will, if urgent in their supplications, obtain what they ask, or a full equivalent for it, in some other form of answer. God has promised his

Holy Spirit to all who ask his gracious influences; and in seeking them, or in making such supplications as are contained in the Lord's prayer, using its language or imbibing its spirit, we are exhorted to be very importunate, with an assurance that our perseverance in prayer will be acceptable unto God.

By the Holy Spirit, as well as by his constant example, our Lord taught his disciples to pray. His example was calculated to inspire them with humility and meekness, as well as unbounded benevolence; it taught them to pray that God's will might be done, and that their own might be kept in subjection to it—to pray for their enemies, and for all that might spitefully use them, and for the extension of gospel peace and blessedness among the various nations of the earth. But he chiefly taught them by his Spirit, whose intercessions are always offered to help the strivings of the faithful, and whose promptings, as powerful as they are certain, will be as available to us as they were to the first disciples. The Holy Spirit leads the Christian to the throne of grace, bidding him come boldly, in the name of the great High Priest, Jesus Christ the righteous. He takes of the things of Christ, and shows them unto the believer; puts good desires into the heart, and good thoughts into the mind, and good words into the mouths of all who are true disciples of Jesus. And this help is always needed, not only in discharging the duties of life, in walking according to our high and holy calling, but likewise in prayer; "for we know not what we should pray for as we ought." We need constantly to be taught by this heavenly monitor, what is the will of God concerning us, that we may not even ask any thing contrary to that will. We require to be taught the knowledge of ourselves, the true state of our affections towards God, the nature of our relation to him, and all our spiritual wants, that we may pray for that which is most needful, and only for that which will be profitable to our souls. Such knowledge is imparted to the Christian through the Holy Spirit. The same divine person who inspired the apostles, and enabled them to leave on record their plain testimony to the truth as it is in Jesus, and to enforce by the most earnest precepts, as well as by their constant practice, a life conformable thereto,—who suggested to them the various directions on the subject of prayer, contained in the epistles,—this same source of heavenly wisdom supplies

every Christian with abundant help to prayer and religious meditation. Wherefore, seek his counsel and his aid, whenever your spiritual wants oppress you, and you are unable fully to express them; or when your soul, absorbed in contemplation of the goodness and mercy of God, cannot adequately show forth his praise. Indeed this should be done at all times by every devout Christian. For there is none such, who, in private communion with God, does not feel the want of divine teaching, to enable him to do that effectually, which it is both a duty and a pleasure to do daily, "by prayer and supplication to make known his requests to God." The best deeds of a frail mortal are imperfect—the iniquity of our most holy things is manifest in the sight of God—our repentance needs to be repented of—our tears of sorrow for sin need to be washed, and our prayers, however fervent and sincere, however well expressed, need to be oft amended by a form of words divinely appointed, and warmed and strengthened by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Now my Christian friends, do you sometimes feel averse to that near and familiar intercourse with God, which you regard as a duty, enjoined by your Lord? Does it become irksome to you at any time, and do you find it hard to converse with God as with a friend, to be alone with him, and open your heart to his searching gaze? Is your spiritual life fast ebbing away, and your heart growing more and more insensible to religious impressions, to the claims of God and the life to come upon your chief attention? If you are in such case, you have need of special help from heaven, and will do well to imitate the first disciples of our Lord, calling upon him earnestly, as in the words of our text, "Lord, teach us to pray." Such an application to the source of all spiritual, as well as temporal good, it becomes all to make, whether they have professed to be disciples of Jesus or not. If they have been long given to prayer, or have never yet performed, what, as dependent creatures, they must in reason and conscience admit to be a duty, in either case, men may with much earnestness be exhorted to call upon the Lord for guidance and help. If you have never prayed to Him who made you, who preserves you from evil, and who has revealed himself as your Redeemer from sin, and eternal death, let your first petition be the humble, but fervent one, "Lord, teach us to pray." "Fill our hearts with a spirit of supplication, and touch our lips with holy fire, that we may

come before thee with words fitly spoken." This simple prayer any one may offer, and the God who heareth prayer will surely answer it in his own time and manner. And if offered in sincerity and earnestness by those who have never given any other evidence of piety, it may be the open door through which grace will flow abundantly, to make them heirs of eternal life, and finally meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. And you, Christian friends, who have been wont to pray unto the Lord your God, may be assured that if you offer the petition in the text, you will be taught of the Lord, always in such a manner as will promote your spiritual welfare, though not perhaps at the time, or in the manner which you desired. God teaches you by his providence as well as by his word and his Spirit. And when you call upon him for instruction, when you adopt the language of the text, and implore him to teach you to pray, be sure that you do so with sincerity, with a heart submissive to his will, and disposed to be taught as it may please him.

Do you, then, with a deep sense of your infirmity and spiritual want, with a strong desire to be taught of God, lift up your voice unto him for instruction and help, beseeching him to give you a heart more disposed to private devotion, to fill you with a desire to pray, and to teach you how to pray? And do you wait for an answer to your cry? While you wait, the hand of death is held threateningly over you—fell disease has fastened itself upon you, and you are writhing under its torturing, wasting power. You who were once disposed to claim credit for meek submission to the will of God, and for patience under his chastenings, now feel your faith wavering, and your heart sinking under discouragement, or rising in rebellion against God's authority and appointments. Yet you ought not to complain—you are tried in God's own way, and should humbly submit to the trial for the welfare of your soul. You have an answer to your prayer, and will not surely repine. While you were living at ease in Zion, abating your spiritual zeal and watchfulness, and feeling a languor of devotion, you called upon God for a praying spirit. Be content, now you are in distress, for God is teaching you to pray. His hearing ear was open, but his mode of answer was his own. Some of you may offer the same prayer in the midst of domestic joys, which, perhaps, have been the great hinderances to devotion, the idols you worship, being

household gods. God is jealous, and will not give his glory to another; he sees your idolatry and resolves to abolish it. In his book of dispensations he quickly writes bereavement for you. His messenger, death, lays his hand upon the dearest idol that you have, and summons the loved one to the chambers of the grave. Your heart is bowed in sorrow, and almost broken—it is smitten sorely, yet it weeps not piously. Why is this? Why do you not cry unto God for grace to enable you to bear his wise though afflictive dispensation? for spiritual discernment to know the plague of your heart, which he would remove? Rebel not, repine not. You have but an answer to your deliberate petition to the God of your salvation. The Lord is teaching you to pray. Bear up like a true Christian, under the trial which has been sent as the most effectual means of establishing you in grace, weaning you from an undue attachment to the world, and fixing your affections upon him, into whose eternal kingdom you hope to come, through faith in his Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

My hearers, these are teachings which God gives to many of you, and though they be not rehearsed in your own ears, let not the benefit of the observation of such trials of others be lost by any of you. When sorrow comes to the bosom of your neighbour—when the angel of death flaps his dark wing over your dwelling, in his visit to one who feels as secure as yourself,—reflect that God is as liberal in these, his providences, as in all the displays of his goodness and love,—that while he chastens one, he warns another; and the same dispensation which teaches the sufferer by personal experience, working patience and hope, is designed to warn others to cleave unto the Lord, lest they too be visited with affliction. Take heed unto all the teachings of your God, whether they are given in his word, by the influence of his Holy Spirit, or in the dispensations of his providence. Let them lead you to such fervent prayer as will quicken repentance, strengthen faith, and enlarge in your hearts that knowledge and love of God, which are the foretaste of eternal bliss. Then will you help to extend the kingdom of the Redeemer, for the enlargement of which he has taught you to pray, and which we pray heartily that God will establish every where in the earth, to his own glory, and man's eternal well-being.

SERMON XIV.

“Peace I leave with you: my peace I give unto you.”—JOHN xiv. 27.

THIS was a Hebrew form of bidding farewell. But it was not used by our Saviour as a mere compliment, after the manner of the world, as he declares in the words which directly follow, “Not as the world giveth, give I unto you.” Indeed, by considering the whole discourse of Jesus, contained in the chapter from which the text is taken, we shall perceive that he intended to leave his disciples a substantial blessing, and we may learn what that blessing is which he bequeathed to them. The discourse of which the text is a part, was delivered to his disciples by our Lord, at the close of the last supper, which he shared with them. Having warned them of his approaching departure to a place whither they could not follow him, meaning another world, he proceeds to administer consolation to them, under the sorrows which this information had excited. He tells them not to be troubled in heart, but to believe in him; for he was going to his Father’s house, (wherein were many mansions) to prepare a place for them. He declares that this was the object of his departure; that when he called them to be his followers, he designed to confer upon them spiritual blessings. He had nothing to offer them in this life, that the world regarded as valuable, nothing pertaining to earthly kingdom and power. Of this he had often given them sufficient assurance. And if he had not something better to bestow, something that would far outweigh the good things that the world offered to its favourites, he, their Lord, would have told them frankly. But he urges them to put their trust in him, and to hope for that bliss in heaven which he would surely procure for them. He not only declares that there is in heaven a house eternal, not

made with hands, into which they shall be received, but he further declares that he is himself the way of access to his heavenly Father: "I am the way: no man cometh unto the Father but by me." He is "the way, the truth, and the life," the Mediator between God and man, the means of communication with God, the true teacher of the doctrine which comforts and saves, and the source of that eternal life which will be fully realized in the heavenly mansions. He assures them that all their prayers shall be effectual, which they shall offer in his name, and the Holy Ghost shall be sent to comfort and sustain them in the exercise of the duties, and the endurance of the trials, incident to their high calling. Having exhorted them to show their love for him by the diligence with which they kept his commandments, he promises to send them a Comforter, who shall take his place, abide with them forever, and bring to their remembrance all that he had said unto them, teaching and guiding them in the way of eternal salvation. John xiv. 27. Then follows the assurance contained in the words of our text. "Peace I leave with you: my peace I give unto you."

We may now perceive more clearly the force of this expression, and may readily conclude that it conveys something more than a mere farewell at the approach of the hour of parting. It may rather be regarded as a substantial legacy bequeathed to his disciples by the adorable Saviour, the full value of which we can hardly express. Let us attempt, however, to show what this peace is, which he left for all who will believe in him, and become his trusty followers.

The true Christian, then, may be regarded as at peace with God, with his fellow men, and with himself, and made so by a true and lively faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

First, he is at peace with God. It is an essential doctrine of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and one upon which the whole system of redemption is founded, that all the world is corrupt in the sight of God; that as soon as the faculties of the mind are developed, evil propensities are exhibited, and every man is incapable, (without the help of faith in Jesus and of divine grace given unto him through the same,) of rendering himself acceptable to God. This corruption of nature, (which leads to actual transgressions, as soon as the mind can discern between good and evil,) is what is called

“enmity against God,” since it keeps a man from obeying the law of God, which is holy, just and good.

Now the redemption of man by the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ, (which is the subject of the gospel or the glad tidings published in the New Testament,) is the restoration of man to the state of holiness and consequent acceptance with God, from which he had fallen, which restoration is effected by the voluntary obedience of the Redeemer, who submitted to suffering and death, to take away the sin of the world. The word of God declares the justification and salvation of man only through the grace of God in Jesus Christ. It pleased God to declare the pardon of all sin through faith in the divine Redeemer, and the promise of the gift of his Holy Spirit, by whose constant enlivening and sanctifying influence, the pardoned believer may be enabled to do the will of God more perfectly than he otherwise could. It is not possible for a man to be perfect on earth, even with the help of the Holy Spirit, but whoever believes in Jesus has the comforting assurance, that his imperfect obedience, performed in faith and under the influence of the Holy Spirit, will be accepted through the merits and intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ. And he is assured that there is no other ground of acceptance with God.

Now since man is by nature so inclined to evil that he can do nothing acceptable to God without faith and divine grace, and since he cannot be pardoned for the actual sins into which his corrupt inclinations will lead him, except by the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ, it is evident that man is delivered from a state of enmity to God through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who is therefore the giver of peace to all who believe in him. Hence Christ is called “our peace,” by St. Paul in his epistle to the Ephesians, wherein he declares that Christ “had broken down the wall of partition between Jew and Gentile,” making of twain one new man, “that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby, and came and preached peace to you who were afar off, and to them that were nigh, for through him we both have an access by one Spirit unto the Father.”

This is the peace which we are now considering, the peace of reconciliation with God, of access unto him through the mediation of Jesus and the sanctification which he purchased for us. This is the best portion of that “peace on earth,” which together with

"glory to God in the highest," was shouted by the heavenly host, when the birth of the Saviour was announced by angels to the shepherds of Israel. This was the subject of the highest strains of ancient prophecy, when holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. The harps of ministering angels in the courts of heaven tremble with sweetest melody to the joyful sound of the same peace, when it has been accepted by one penitent sinner. Let not sinful man alone be mute, (who is chiefly interested in this way of reconciliation) amid the hosts of created beings who show forth the praise of the Redeemer. Let all who have become reconciled to God the Father, through faith in the Lord Jesus, joyfully and thankfully acknowledge their divine Redeemer, and strive to glorify his name by living in obedience to his holy will and commandments.

But beware, my hearers, how you cry "peace to your souls, when there is no peace." Beware how you hold fast the sweet hope of reconciliation with God, when you can give no evidence of the working of that faith through which you hope for pardon and acceptance with him. It is not enough that you profess to believe in Christ, to regard him as the Son of God sent from heaven to be the way of reconciliation to God; you must show that you have entered that way, by the spirit of obedience which dwells in you, and the desire which you have to do his will; by the influence which faith has had upon your life and conversation. This evidence of your peace with God you will be able to give, if you are sincere in your profession, and are not deluded in your hope of salvation. Of the insincere we have but little to say, because we always hope the best of every professor, and would believe that they are few. But that little will be enough to remind them of the slippery ground upon which they stand. It is said by one of the reprovers of Job, who charged him with hypocrisy, that "the hope of the hypocrite shall perish,"—"he shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand." And this would seem so reasonable that there could be little need of appealing to the word of God for such assurance. But our Lord has left a warning to false professors which even the doubtful would do well to consider seriously. He has not only declared that many will claim to be partakers of his glory who have not been partakers of his grace, but has also declared their condemnation. "Many will say to me

in that day, Lord, Lord, (as indeed they have said all their life, without acting as if he were their Lord,) have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then I will profess unto them, I never knew you—depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” This is Christ’s own testimony, and it becomes all who profess to be his disciples, and hope for acceptance through him, to take heed lest they be found among the many who in spite of their profession of faith, will be cast out unacknowledged by the Lord of glory.

The evidence of a genuine saving faith in Christ, of a share in that redemption which he has purchased, of that peace which we have just considered, may be noticed properly under the other two divisions of our subject.

The true Christian may be regarded, I have said, as at peace with his fellow men. The commandment which our Lord and Saviour enforced upon his disciples particularly, at the time when he left them this legacy of peace, was that of mutual love. He gave it as a distinguishing mark of his followers, to whom he had shown so much love, that they should be careful to love one another. And it is the uniform testimony of the New Testament, that “love is the fulfilling of the law,” for “love worketh no ill to his neighbour.” Now, besides the general test of true discipleship, prescribed by our Saviour, “that they should keep his commandments,” there is a special injunction laid down by him, that they should show their gratitude to him for his unwearied and inestimable love for them, by loving others, by showing kindness and affection to all around them. This feeling of gratitude which he had so great a right to claim, would be sufficient, (if commensurate with their obligation) to direct their conduct towards their fellow men, so that they might be always at peace with them. I mean, so far as depends on themselves. It would prevent any disturbance of peace by their own conduct and to their own reproach; and would enable them to be at peace with their fellow Christians. For these are all bound by the same rule, and are required, as they are surely able, to be on terms of peace. This was strongly inculcated on Christians for the honour and advantage of their religion, that its influence might be so exhibited that men would adopt it, and thus glorify the Father through the Son. How far they can be on terms of reciprocal peace with “the

world," is another question. The apostles of our Lord exhort Christians to "do good to all men, especially to them who are of the household of faith," and to live peaceably with all men if possible. "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." This injunction follows that characteristic precept of the Christian religion, that we should "recompense to no man evil for evil." It has the qualification, "if it be possible," admitting that it may not be, in consequence of the obstinate hostility of others. But the expression, "as much as lieth in you," shows that the qualification only referred to the intractable disposition of the irreligious. The fault must not be in Christians, if they are not at peace with all the world. It is the very spirit of their religion to cultivate and maintain peace and good will to men, and the tendency of all the precepts, if put in practice, is always and entirely to the most perfect peace. The meekness and lowliness of the Saviour's character, which was a model for all his followers, would, if imitated, keep all men from all discord and strife, for there would be no occasion of offence, and no disposition to take offence where none was meant.

Now, in every respect Christ's legacy of peace with their fellow men, bequeathed to his disciples, is set forth in the gospel. He has given them an assurance of forgiveness of sins, and a direction "to forgive other men their trespasses, as God has for his sake forgiven them." How shall they hope for mercy who have showed no mercy? Shall not they who have been released from the vast debt of ten thousand talents, through the free grace of God, in Christ Jesus, be willing to discharge their fellow sinner from the trifling debt of a hundred pence?

Again, will not the disciples of that Lord, who suffered insult, ignominy and torture, yea, even a cruel death, without a murmur, and died forgiving his very murderers, will not the disciples of such a Lord bear meekly the petty injuries and insults of their fellow men, to maintain their consistency, to strengthen their faith, advance their holiness and glorify their Redeemer? Will they not strive by so doing to be at peace with all men? And can they claim a share in the legacy of Christ, if they do not strive, by fulfilling the commandments and complying with the injunctions of their Lord, to provide things honest in the sight of all men, to give no occasion for strife, and to regard all men as neigh-

bours and entitled to their love? This peace Christ left with his disciples; and all who are indeed his disciples may and ought to enjoy it. It is one of the evidences and comforts of true faith. May it abound unto all who profess the name of our blessed Redeemer.

Lastly. True Christians should be, according to the view which has been taken of the text, also at peace with themselves. This branch of the subject may be supposed to be comprised within the other two divisions. And so indeed it is in some measure, since it may be regarded as a matter of course, that they who are at peace with God and with their fellow men, must also be at peace with themselves. The great sources of inward disturbance are indeed cut off when the mind rests in a settled hope of reconciliation with God, and an assurance of peace with all the world. Yet there are some things that may be more properly considered under this head, though they follow from the truth already stated.

True then, beyond question it is, and as comforting as it is true, that the Christian is at peace with himself, because he is at peace with God. The sense of guilt, and the apprehension of punishment, are exchanged for the sense of pardon, and the hope of all the blessings which will be the fruit of faith.

He has been struggling with his own heart, perhaps, for a long time; enduring the conflict between his sinful lusts, and his conscience alarmed by the word of God, and accusing him of guilt. The terrors of God's condemning law have been long striving together with the tender mercies of his love, to turn the sinner from his evil ways. He has drowned his tears, perhaps, in the cup of pleasure. But when he has found how the world pays its votaries, giving them bitter dregs to mar the pleasure which sparkled at the brim of the cup, when he has seen how great is the contrast between the cold heartedness of the sinful world which he worships, and the patient, long-suffering and self-sacrificing love of the God whom he has dishonoured and despised, he has confessed his sins, and cast himself unreservedly upon the mercy of his God and Saviour.

Now the fierce struggle is over; he looks back upon the past, only to keep before his eyes a beacon to warn him of the danger of sin, and a memorial of the loving-kindness of his Redeemer, to stimulate his grateful devotion. His thoughts are chiefly turned

upwards and forwards, to the reconciled countenance of his heavenly Father, and to the bliss of holiness in this world and in the world to come. Whereas he was once a prey to feelings which gave him no rest, to doubt, and self-upbraidings, to despair and self-loathing, or to maddening lusts that drove him like an evil spirit "ofttimes into the fire and ofttimes into the water," he is now calm and collected, having a good hope of eternal salvation, (the bliss of which has already begun,) having no anxiety but that of grateful love, lest he should not fulfil all the duties of his calling, and be a worthy disciple of Jesus. Instead of the keen sense of a wounded conscience, or the restless state of a struggle to quell its risings, and resist its admonitions, he has the quiet complacency of a hearty self-approval, for the decision which he has made, and the assurance of the future approbation of his Lord, if he perseveres in his course. In short, he is at peace with his own heart, satisfied with himself for the choice of a Master who will reward him faithfully, and for his reception of a Saviour who will pity and relieve his infirmities, and will at last give him, if he shall endure to the end, a crown of glory that shall not fade away.

Thus we have considered the peace which Christ left with his disciples, under the several points of view proposed. We can only add a fervent prayer that it may be enjoyed in its fulness by all who do now, or may hereafter, profess to believe in Jesus.

God grant you may be found worthy to be counted his own children by adoption, heirs of the promises, faithful disciples, using all diligence to make your calling sure. He is faithful who has promised you life eternal, and if you are careful to fulfil the conditions of salvation, you cannot come short of it. Strive then for the crown, remembering that love is the fulfilling of the law. Where love is, there will be peace, peace with yourselves, and with your fellow men, caused by peace with God, through a Redeemer's love. God grant you all these benefits of Christ's mediation, for the sake of the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMON XV.

“For the love of Christ constraineth us.”—2 CORINTHIANS v. 14.

MANKIND make a false estimate of the value of religion, and of its importance in comparison with the various objects of pursuit, which pass not the bounds of this life. They seem to regard a whole life, devoted to the concerns of worldly business or pleasure, as too short for the attainment of the things that perish with the using; while the few last moments of existence, crowded as they must be with regrets that accompany the recollection of the past, and with dismal apprehensions of the future, are deemed sufficient for the due preparation for eternity. And it is very common to hear men denounce, as the greatest fanaticism, that zeal in religion which they commend and encourage in all other pursuits. By the common voice of society, whoever devotes all his energies to the calling in which he is engaged, is highly extolled for his diligence, and held up for imitation as an excellent pattern. This is the judgment of men of the world in regard to worldly things, for which alone they are concerned. But let a disciple of Jesus display like zeal and energy in the cause of his divine Master, and he is forthwith derided, or denounced as an enthusiast. Such is the inconsistency of the world. And it shows in a striking manner, how little faith there is in the world; how weak is the hold which religion has on the minds of most men. For the same pursuits engaged in with the same zeal, when viewed in different aspects, excite opposite sentiments in the same mind. If any of the usual employments of life be diligently pursued, for the sake of individual profit or honour, or even for the good of society, the diligence exerted is readily and warmly commended. But if the avowed motive to that diligence be the sense of obligation to the God who made us, and to whom we

are accountable for the use of our faculties, then it becomes infatuation, and excites only pity and contempt. Would this be so, if the idea of religious obligation had firm possession of the minds of those who pretend to believe in the existence of God?

But this inconsistency that we have just noticed is not the fault of this age particularly. It has prevailed ever since the days of the apostles. They had to contend with the same spirit of opposition to religious zeal. If they were raised beyond the common measure of the age in which they lived, by the contemplation of the sublime truths of the religion that they preached, and were filled with rapture as they discoursed of their Lord, they who denied the faith, and could not understand the spirit which moved them, cried out, "What mean these babblers?" or, "Away with these fellows!"

Take as an illustration, the greeting which St. Paul received from the heathen Festus, when he defended himself before king Agrippa. While the apostle kindled with a glow of rapture, at the mention of that sober certainty of hope, for which he was held in question by the Jews, Festus interrupted him in the midst of his defence, saying, "Paul, thou art beside thyself."

Now it would seem, from some of the writings of this apostle, that his zeal for the Christian religion had been often regarded as madness, by those who were opposed to its successful progress. In his epistle to the Corinthians, from which the text is taken, he says, in allusion to that fervency of spirit which he displayed in the service of the Lord, "For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God, or whether we be sober, it is for your cause." And he then goes on to account for his zeal, in language which it be-
hooves every Christian professor, and especially every Christian minister, always to bear in mind, "For the love of Christ constraineth us." He has an ardent devotion to his Divine Master, that will not let him do otherwise. His whole soul is absorbed by it, and it must direct and control all his energies. It constrains him to utter the deep feeling of gratitude, in strong language, and to labour mightily for the cause of so dear a Master. Let us hear what he says of the ground of that warm devotion to Christ Jesus,—why the love of Christ so constrained him. "Because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they who live, should not henceforth

live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again." This is a sufficient cause for all his zeal—this sober judgment of his obligation to Christ, who had redeemed him and all mankind from eternal death. The love of Christ was strong within him, when he contemplated the condition of man without a Saviour, and then considered the mercy of the Saviour. And feeling a proper sense of his obligation, he could not but devote all his energies of body and soul, to the cause of Christ—to the enlargement of his kingdom upon earth, the extension of the benefits of his sacrifice and mediation to all the world.

This is the dictate of sober judgment, as the apostle avers. For if Christ died for all, then is he entitled to the service of all who were saved by him—they should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him—they should no longer live according to their own will and pleasure, seeking their own interest and gratification, but should devote themselves, with all their talents and possessions, to the will and glory of their Redeemer and King.

This feeling of entire dependence upon Christ for all that is most precious to the soul, and the consequent entire devotion to Christ, is often urged upon Christians by the apostles, as a proper exhibition of that faith which they profess. Indeed it follows of course that no Christian liveth to himself alone, since he is not his own, but being bought with a price, is the property of a divine Master. And the apostles of our Lord, true to their high and holy calling, would not suffer their converts to lose sight of the ground of their hope and trust for spiritual and eternal good. If these converts were reminded of the fatal snares of the tempter, and urged to resist them with all their might, they were encouraged, under the despair which might lead them to say, "Who is sufficient for these things?" with the assurance of the Saviour, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

If the fear of condemnation cast a sudden dimness over the eye of faith, the bold challenge of the inspired teacher came to restore confidence to the faltering, saying, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

If mention is made of righteousness, it is that which cometh of faith in Christ Jesus, "not of works, lest any man should boast." If repentance is relied on as sufficient to blot out sin, the error is quickly corrected. The tear of penitence needs to be washed. "It is the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ which cleanseth from all sin." If Christians are exhorted "to work out their own salvation," it is to be done "with fear and trembling." They are reminded that they cannot do it in their own strength, but that their "sufficiency is of God." If the keeping of the moral law is enjoined as an evidence of true faith, there is a like reference to the Saviour. It is called "obedience unto Christ." If there is boasting, it is the boast of being made partaker of Christ. "God forbid," says the apostle, "that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ." A constant reference is made to our Saviour. Our hope is in Him, in whom we believe. Our strength is in him, our obedience is unto him, or through him. Our life should be devoted to his service, for "He is our life."

Such is the testimony of Scripture to the character of Christian redemption. The love of God in Christ Jesus, is the foundation of our hope—the undeserved mercy of God displayed in the atonement, is our only refuge, and our grateful love of Christ should be the ruling motive of all our actions in the Christian life. Indeed the gospel acknowledges no holiness which is not the fruit of faith in this free undeserved mercy. This foundation of hope must abide forever. The Christian should never lose sight of it. His growth in holiness of character, (which is the fruit of his faith,) can never be properly or safely regarded as the foundation of hope, though it will strengthen his trust in the true foundation, just as returning health strengthens the confidence of the patient in the medicine that has restored him.

Man naturally trusts to himself—to his merit, if he has done well,—or to his penitence for the sin which he has committed. Self, in some form or other, is his constant refuge and hope. But a genuine conversion to the faith which the gospel enjoins, shows him the broken reed on which he leans, and sends him at once and always to the eternal Rock of his salvation. Let this be your trust, my hearers, and let the love of Christ constrain you to discharge all the duties of your high and holy calling, to do the will of him who hath called you. This is the proper

aim of the Christian life, and it should be kept ever in view by that grateful recollection of divine mercy, displayed in the work of redemption, which is so strongly expressed in the text.

The more fully and strongly a man believes in the doctrine of redemption, as it is declared in Scripture, the more should he strive, if consistent, to keep the commandments of Christ. The more firmly persuaded he is that his good works alone cannot save him, the more earnestly should he strive to adorn his profession of faith with an abundance of those works. Let every professor of Christianity consider this. For although it is perfectly true that morality will not carry a man to heaven, it is equally true that no man can go there without it. All that Christ commands must be done, not only because he commands it, (which might be merely a slavish obedience,) but because love for him constrains us to seek his glory by the consecration of ourselves to his service. It is the motive which gives character to the best actions. The same outward action which the Christian performs from the desire to show his love for Christ, may be performed by the worldly man from selfish and worldly motives. While you are careful, therefore, to do the works of the moral law, be sure that you are prompted by a Christian motive.

Let it be seen, then, in all your exercises of devotion, and in all your endeavours to keep the commandments of God, that "the love of Christ constrains you." And let this vital principle rule in your hearts, prompting you to zeal in promoting the cause of your divine Master. Be not afraid of growing too warm in the cause. It is not a fault of the age in which we live,—if it be a fault, to be over zealous in religious devotion. And be not deterred from any rational expression of religious feeling, by the sneers of the lukewarm and indifferent. It is not possible to be too zealous in a cause so great and important—either in the service of Christ by devotional exercises, or in striving to recommend his religion to others, and thus to enlarge his kingdom on earth. There can be no objection to the degree of zeal, the intensity of feeling, however great. But the expression of it must be rational. If a mere bodily exercise, or a nervous excitement be mistaken for the lifting up of the soul to God, the sober and devout Christian will condemn the reproach which is cast upon religion, while he pities the delusion of the worshipper.

Be sure that your worship is a rational exercise, and then be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Let the cause of religion, eternal in its concerns, awful in its warnings, and triumphant in its hopes, receive at least equal favour with the perishable things of this life. Let not Satan, or the world, have all the vigour of your body, and the full energy of your soul, while you devote to Christ only a small portion of your wasted strength. Sorry are we to confess that the professed believers in the Christian religion, make a false comparative estimate of its importance. If a man is constantly active in the pursuit of wealth, if he rise early and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness, to increase his store, he is then commended as a thrifty man. If the ambitious student consume the midnight oil in the diligent pursuit of learned lore, or he who has a genius for the fine arts, wastes his bodily strength by a constant application to his captivating employment, the former is extolled as a man of noble mind, and the latter is approved as one enamoured of his profession. But let a little of this energy and devotedness be manifested in the cause of religion,—which is “the one thing needful”—let the love of Christ constrain his disciple to a warm expression of his attachment to his Master, or to a vigorous effort to promote the growth of piety in the church, and they who commended the zeal of the worldly, will condemn his enthusiasm, and perhaps cry out like Festus, “Thou art beside thyself!!” My brethren, these things ought not so to be.

Be earnest and zealous in religion—for it is worthy of your soul’s highest regard. Be not afraid to cherish the warmest religious sensibility, so it be expressed in a rational and reverent manner. There is no word denounced against a warm devotion to the cause of true religion. But there is one against lukewarmness. Take heed lest ye incur it. But let not your zeal evaporate in a noisy expression of love for Christ. Let it appear in a constant and diligent endeavour to adorn the doctrine which you profess, by a life of obedience to his will. You have to wage a continual warfare with “temptations without, and corruption within.” Let the love of Christ induce a careful watch over your hearts, and a persevering struggle to gain the mastery over yourself, your passions and propensities, and thus to present in

your own character, a lively and winning example of your Master's religion in its practical operation.

Be not content to stand in the highway, and lifting your proud looks to heaven, to cry out, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we!" But strive so to walk in all the commandments of the Lord, and to reap the fruits of his implanted word, that men may recognise that temple by its spiritual adornments. Then will it appear that the love of Christ constraineth you, because he hath said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

Religious zeal is often misdirected. Some men will fight for their religion, and some will even dare to die for it! Would that more were willing to live for it! Then would the cause of Christ gain such a decided victory over sin, the world, and the devil, that he would "see the travail of his soul, and be satisfied." Then would hasten on that glorious day, when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea, and when the kingdoms of the earth shall become the kingdoms of our Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal and ever blessed Redeemer.

It is the eloquent teaching of a religious life which wins souls to Christ. Many a halting sinner encourages himself in his dangerous state, by the observed inconsistencies of professing Christians. When therefore the professor would show what the Lord has done for his soul, let him exhibit, in striking beauty, what his soul is doing for the Lord.

If the love of Christ dwells in your hearts, it will move you to do something for his church, and his religion. Does it now prompt you to nurse into strength and fulness of stature that spiritual life which Christ has planted within you? Do you improve all the means of grace ordained in his church—every opportunity of hearing the word of God, joining in public prayer, and partaking of the spiritual feast of Christ's body and blood? And are you ready at all times to help to sustain the church by your worldly substance, as God has prospered you?

If the love of Christ be in you, such love as faith in his blood-shedding should inspire, it will move you at least to keep for him the souls which he has redeemed,—to keep them pure and holy—to strengthen them by vigorous exercise, that they may glorify him by their fruit-bearing, as branches of himself, the parent vine. Redemption is a cheap thing in your eyes, if it

does not compel such tribute. Profession is an unmeaning thing, if it does not pledge such grateful service. Christ gave himself for you. Can you do less than give yourself to him? You make a small return even then, when the two gifts are compared. But man has no greater offering to make. And Christ asks no other.

Let the love of Christ constrain you, not only to lead a holy life, but also a life devoted to the setting forth of his kingdom, through the extension of his church, and the scattering of the riches of his grace. May we all prove our faith by love here on earth, and finally prove the word of Christ by receiving the inheritance of glory in heaven!

SERMON XVI.

“Will a man rob God?”—MALACHI iii. 8.

SUCH is God's expostulation with his people who had gone away from his ordinances and deserted his service. His people bring home to them their guilt by several appeals designed to set forth its heinousness.

The high daring and impious defiance of Divine authority, displayed by the feeble creatures of an Almighty Creator, the wicked and foolish presumption of beings who cannot escape from the constant scrutiny of the all-wise Governor of the world, and the base ingratitude of those who have received undeserved benefits from the hands of an all bountiful benefactor,—are all brought to view by the messenger of God, when he asks the searching question, “Will a man rob God?” And well may it be asked with the strongest emphasis. For, can it be that any mortal will boldly defy the majesty of Heaven, and the hand that can destroy as well as create? Or will he presume that he can elude the watchful eye of the omniscient Jehovah, and withhold stealthily what he dares not openly refuse? Or, can he, who owes all that he possesses to the gratuitous bounty of his heavenly Father, refuse to acknowledge the goodness of that Father, by an offering of thanksgiving? Is it credible? Is it possible? If it were not a matter of common observation, if it were not proved daily and hourly, that men enlightened by the word of God, through Christ Jesus our Lord, in regard to their higher duties, continually neglect those duties, we might pause for a reply to these questions.

But like as God's people were of old, so are many of them now. They who lived under the law given to Moses, robbed God of the

service, obedience, love and gratitude that were due to him. And the same charge may be brought against many who enjoy the blessings of the Christian dispensation. Many now rob God, by withholding from him the service which is due to him, as we shall show in several particulars.

1st. By neglecting to keep his holy day, as he appointed it.

2dly. By refusing to give him a portion of their worldly substance, according as he has blessed them.

3dly. By offering him a merely formal worship, keeping back the heart for the service of the world.

I. God has commanded us to "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy;" and has declared in the Bible, that he set apart the seventh day as a "holy" day, or Sabbath, because he rested from the work of creation on that day. That is (for we need know nothing more on the subject) he was pleased to ordain that man should give to him a certain portion of time, regularly to be spent in worship, as a mark of recognition of God's hand in the creation of the world, and of his continual benefits bestowed upon his creatures, and an expression of praise for his goodness. And that portion of time—one day in seven, (which God requires) is just the proportion of rest to labour, which the physical constitution of man demands. God has thus wisely adapted his requirements to our necessities. The most eminent physiologists agree in declaring that the constitution of man demands rest from labour about one seventh part of his life, at regular periods, in order to recruit his wasted strength. And all observation goes to confirm their opinion. This should both increase our admiration of the wisdom and benevolence of God, who ordained this rest, and powerfully act upon our self-love as a motive to embrace such a salutary provision.

The sanctions of God's word therefore are strongly enforced upon those who yield to the voice of human experience, a greater deference than they will pay to divine authority, by the uniform testimony of facts, gathered from daily observation, which show, conclusively that the setting apart of one day in each week for religious worship and employment, is as beneficial to man morally and physically, as it is becoming to him as a subject of God's revealed law.

We might present many facts going to show very clearly the

truth of what we declare. But they may be found in the various permanent documents published in the tract form, by those who have given special attention to this matter.

But though it were otherwise—though we could see no proof of any moral fitness in the appointment of the seventh day, as a day of rest from worldly employments, it being a divine appointment we should feel bound to keep it. The Sabbath, as originally ordained, was made for man. God, having made the world in six days, “blessed the seventh day and sanctified it,” that is, (for this is one meaning of our word “sanctify” in the holy Scriptures,) set it apart for his service. In the same sense, the vessels used in the temple of the Lord were sanctified. And in the same sense Christians are by baptism “sanctified” to God, or made holy before him, (not made holy, in their inward character, through the power of the Spirit, this may not be,) but sanctified in the sense of being specially dedicated by an outward rite to the service of God. They may not give proof of a hearty dedication of themselves to the Lord; yet they are sanctified in one sense; and as Christians are so spoken of in the New Testament, in some places, we should bear it in mind, in order to prevent misunderstanding and dispute.

To return to our subject. God having set apart one seventh portion of time to his special service, or one day in every week, we are bound to give him that day, the whole of it. To bestow two hours on public worship, and all the rest of the day upon our domestic concerns, or our personal gratifications, is not fulfilling God’s command. It is surely robbing God. The rigid requirement of total rest from labour of all kinds, was meant for the Jews only. Such rest is now required as will mark the day a holy day, according to God’s appointment,—rest from all unnecessary labour, from every worldly employment, except such as may be turned to God’s glory, through the pious or charitable purpose which prompted it.

The preparation of necessary food, and such care of one’s household as decency requires, may be allowed to occupy a small portion of the day. But the whole disposition of our time should show that we regard the day as the Lord’s. Mere physical rest, which may be only a personal indulgence, does not make the day what God designed that it should be. It is your day, and not the Lord’s, if you spend it in self-indulgence. You must spend it in

his service—in worshipping him, in prayer and praise, offered in public as well as in private, in such employments as will tend to promote his glory in your own salvation, and in the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom.

Public worship in the sanctuary should occupy a portion of every Lord's day. It was set apart by the apostles of our Lord for that purpose, who, when the Jewish system was abolished, dedicated the first day of the week instead of the seventh, to the service of the Lord. Christ rose from the dead on that day and appeared to them in the midst of their assembly. And as their chief worship and praise was offered to God the Saviour, as all their prayers were henceforth to be made in the name of Christ Jesus, and he was to be known among them as "God over all blessed forever," they had good reason to pay, on that day of his resurrection, the tribute which God demanded when he blessed the seventh day and hallowed it. The primitive church continued to keep the first day of the week as a day of holy convocation, or assembling for religious purposes, in obedience to the apostle's injunction, "Do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is."

And thus, the seventh portion of time which God originally claimed for himself, as a season of religious devotion, of prayer and praise, is by the authority of his inspired apostles, and of the church which they founded, made to coincide with the Lord's day, or Sunday. Now all days are the Lord's—that is, we are bound to serve him every day. And of course if the day called the Lord's is his especially, then is he entitled to the whole of it.

Now public worship is one of the institutions of our religion, without which it could not long be maintained. And whoever would maintain the Christian religion, must not be satisfied with a decent observance of its precepts in his daily walk, or with the stated devotions of the closet; he must also join in public worship. And a Christian professor should feel bound to attend the ministrations of the church regularly. Any unnecessary failure to unite in the stated services of the sanctuary, is a violation of Christian duty, and is robbing God of the offering of praise which he demands.

This is the light in which religious service of any kind should be viewed as an offering to God. Yet many regard their attendance upon the services of the church, if not a mere personal gra-

tification, as a favour conferred on the minister or a compliment to him. And excuses are often made to him for neglect of worship, as if he might regard such neglect as a personal slight. If any of you have thus judged and thus acted, we can assure you that you have greatly mistaken your duty. You owe religious service to your God and Saviour, not to your minister, and he has no other concern in the matter than that you should serve God acceptably, for your own spiritual benefit. If you go to church to please your minister, you are serving him and not God; and if you go to please yourselves, to see and be seen, or to pass a morning hour pleasantly, that would be a dull one at home, you "have your reward." But it is not serving the Lord, and the Lord will not take that to himself which was not meant for him. If, then, you refuse to give up to the Lord the day which belongs to him, and we ask indignantly as well as sorrowfully, "Will you rob God?" you need not attempt to repel the charge by asking in turn, "Wherein have we robbed him?" for it is very clear that you have robbed him of that offering of homage which he has a right to demand.

Let no such charge be made against you, my hearers: learn to regard the Lord's day as a day to be specially and entirely devoted to the Lord's service. It is a day ever to be remembered as that on which the Lord Jesus Christ, our divine Saviour, rose from the dead. And on this day the heart of the Christian should be filled with devout gratitude and cheerful hope—gratitude for the inestimable love of God, who provided for us salvation through Christ Jesus, and the hope of a glorious resurrection through him "who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification." And let not the means of grace ever be neglected. But whenever the sanctuary of the Lord is opened for divine service, come before the Lord with an offering of praise and prayer, remembering that in his house no service will be acceptable that is not designed to do him reverence.

II. The second point of application which we proposed to make of the words of the prophet was the withholding from the Lord our worldly substance according as he has blessed us. Do you ask, "Wherein have we robbed him?" we answer in the words of the prophet, "In tithes and offerings." And it will be very easy to show the general application of this charge. For who gives to the Lord any thing like a fair tribute of thanksgiving for worldly

prosperity; or proportions his offering to the means which God has given him? The prophet speaks of withholding tithes; which word literally means the precise amount, or rate of contribution from their income which God required, though it will stand very well for any amount of substantial offering, taking it generally as the Lord's portion. Of the Jews God demanded a tenth part of their income as his own. And inasmuch as this specific requirement may well be regarded as showing the mind of the Lord in this matter, the least that he would accept from his people,—we know not why a Christian should not bestow at least the proportion which God himself established.

The apostolic rule is, to "Give according as God has prospered us;" that, recognising God as the Giver of all good, we should devote to his service such a portion of what we possess as will prove our sense of gratitude; and we may confidently ask, whether a Christian can be sincere in his acknowledgment of the Divine source of all the blessings which he enjoys, whether he can truly believe that he owes to God all his wealth, if he will not devote to the service and glory of God a tenth part of what he has received? This principle of self-taxation for the support of religion, for the spread of the gospel and the church, is recognised by very few persons. Few regard their possessions as subject to tribute for the Lord's service, and still fewer pay any regard to the rate which God has established. Men give a little of their abundance according to their own good pleasure, and think themselves very generous, and the church deeply indebted to them for the favour. Nay, worse than this, many think that whatever they contribute to the church for any religious purpose, is so much bounty to the minister, so much weight of obligation conferred upon him? But every minister should protest against such a view of the matter. What he receives for himself, he is fully entitled to according to God's ordinance, that "they who preach the gospel, shall live of the gospel:" he is no man's debtor for his decent support, and when he appeals to his people in behalf of the church, for the means of promoting its growth, or for the building, preserving, and adorning, of the sanctuary of the Lord, he appeals to them as Christians, bound to sustain the church and reverence the sanctuary, and taught of God not "to offer unto him that which costs them nothing."

He is the Lord's seravnt, calling upon his Lord's debtors, and

saying to each one of them, "How much owest thou unto my Lord?" And though he should draw from them thousands as a favour to himself, or as a reluctant response to urgent solicitation, he would have little cause for satisfaction, since he would have gained nothing to the cause which he has most at heart—their religious improvement. Remember this, my hearers, that you are urged as Christians, to lend to the Lord what he has given you, that you are invited to show by the habitual surrender of your possessions to the service of the Lord, that you have consecrated yourselves to him, and you are exhorted to regard the bestowal of your worldly goods upon the church, as a high privilege, which you should continually covet.

Be not covetous of any thing but God's grace, and give freely of your luxuries, that you may learn to make a luxury of giving to your Lord and Saviour. Settle it in your minds that you owe God some portion of your worldly store; estimate how much you owe, and then see that you do not rob God of his required tribute. For you will surely rob yourselves of a rich blessing; since on the testimony of our Saviour, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Whatever is given with the true Christian spirit to the Lord's treasury, will be an investment that will yield a hundred fold. If the offering costs some self-denial, so much the better. The gift is more acceptable to God, as the giving will be more beneficial to you. What you thus take from your worldly account is added to your spiritual one. The balance will be struck in another world. But you have the use and enjoyment of the credit of it during your life on earth. In this sense, and in a certain degree, you, who are the Lord's debtor for every thing, become his creditor, on a special promise. And he is faithful who hath promised. Therefore, rob not the Lord of earthly treasure, but lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, the riches of eternal life.

Lastly—you may rob God of what is due to him, by offering a merely formal service, keeping the heart back, which he specially demands:—"My son, give me thy heart," is the language of God to all whom he has called through Christ Jesus. And our Saviour has characterized his religion as having its seat in the heart. No matter how loud may be the profession of religion if the heart is not right in the sight of God: if it is not fixed in devotedness, through the working of the Spirit, there is no offering

made that meets God's requirements, and God is therefore robbed of his true service. You may be baptized into condemnation, if you receive Christian baptism in mockery, or as a mere compliance with the fashion of Christian people. You may eat and drink condemnation, if you come to the Lord's table, without being prepared to feed on him in your heart by faith. And in either ordinance, or in the outward expression of prayer and praise, if the heart is withheld and devoted to worldly things, God is robbed of his best offering, of that which he chooses for his service. So, too, in the practical exhibition of Christ's religion, in respect to godly living, God may be defrauded of his required tribute: a tribute which has been vowed, too, by a solemn vow. As members of the church, you have pledged to him a hearty obedience. The church allows none to slumber at their posts, none to forget the extent of their vows. In her teaching, a profession of religion, such as is made in confirmation, implies a dedication of the whole heart, through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, to the service of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. She knows no other. All her appointments and provisions are designed to promote the renewal of the heart through grace, and its daily devotion to the service and glory of the Redeemer.

If then, member of the church, you are losing your interest in religion, and neglecting to improve the means of grace which the church offers—are you not guilty of preferring the world to Christ? Are you not robbing the Lord of that glory which he might obtain, through the honour of the church you help to mar? Are you not guilty of offering him a formal service? And we put it closely to those members who neglect any of the services of the church, which are calculated to quicken piety and increase holiness, whether by so doing they do not rob God of a portion of what they have vowed to him?

Let us have no deceitful show of religion under any form, for the worst evil is a deceiving of your own souls. Let us have no robbery of God. For this will be a fatal robbery of your own souls. But whatever you profess to give, whether of praise in the sanctuary, or of worldly substance for the support of religion, or of outward obedience to the Christian rule, let all be given to the Lord and not to men. And above all, give him your heart, that it may be sanctified by his Spirit, and be made fit for the world of glory, which Christ will reveal, after the general resurrection.

SERMON XVII.

“Pay that which thou hast vowed.”—ECCLESIASTES v. 4. (last clause.)

THERE are many persons who would shrink from the guilt of breaking a promise to their fellow man, who do not hesitate to break a solemn vow to God. So much more ready is rebellious and sinful man to bow to the laws of his own making, than to those which have been written by the finger of God—to be subservient to the law of honour, rather than submissive to the authority of religion.

Truly says the book of Proverbs, “There is a way which seemeth right to a man, but the end of that way is death.”

A vow is but a promise solemnly made; yet the word is chiefly used to denote a promise made under the sanction of religion. Such promises are often made hastily and rashly, perhaps from a half-admitted doubt, whether the fulfilment of them can ever be enforced. Hence, while men need not be cautioned against hasty promises to their fellows, they need much the counsel of the wise Preacher, “Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter any thing before God.” Again he says, “Better is it that thou shouldst not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pay. Pay that which thou hast vowed.”

The injunction quoted for our text, refers to any religious engagement which may be made, whether particular or general. Under the former head we include all occasional vows of greater holiness, and more unreserved submission to the will of God, induced by some acknowledged mercy, or some severe affliction, or some powerful impression of the Holy Spirit. We distinguish as general vows, those taken in the first dedication of ourselves to the Lord, in the solemn rites of the church.

Let us consider, first, the occasional and special vows which

may be made, and through carelessness or indifference, never paid. There are many such, as perhaps the experience of some of you may testify. Few persons indeed can be found who cannot bear witness to some of them. Among them are the pledges of religious devotedness, which are given at a time of peculiar danger, when one is filled with apprehension for the safety of body or soul.

Have not some of you, my hearers, been exposed to great peril, having, as you then supposed, but a very feeble hold of life, and feeling that you were fast hastening to the dreaded retributions of eternity?

And have you in a moment of sudden awakening, mourned your habitual neglect of the means of grace bestowed upon you, and your contempt of the salvation offered by our Lord Jesus Christ, and prayed for time to make your peace with God? Have you resolved that if you could be spared for a few years, you would strive earnestly to give yourself to God, confessing the Lord Jesus as your Saviour and Master, and walking henceforth in his holy way? Did the Redeemer whom you had long slighted, then seem precious in your sight? When no other arm was nigh to save, did you grasp the Lord's, blessing God for his abundant mercy, and declaring that in him you would forever trust? And when the danger had passed, and you were restored to health, or relieved from the peril, whatever it may have been, did you forget your vow, made to the hearer of your prayer and your merciful deliverer? Did you remember your feelings and your promise, but as the weakness of a diseased or dying person? And now, believing that you are strong and safe, do you live as if there were no Saviour, and no eternal condemnation to the unrepentant sinner? If this be your case, hearer, you will do well to listen to the voice of the sage Preacher in Ecclesiastes, and "Pay that which thou hast vowed."

If you neglect to do so, thinking that all is well, or defer paying your vow till you are again brought into peril, can you trust to the hope of God's mercy a second time, after having once broken your solemn pledge to him? You may be suddenly snatched away by death before you have made another vow, or remembered that which you have made, to keep it. Wherefore,

be advised of your unfaithfulness and the danger of it, and pay your vows unto the Most High, in this your day of salvation.

Again, you have been called to bear affliction, perhaps to bow your soul beneath the stroke of God's chastening dispensations. While you were yet overwhelmed with sorrow, and felt assured (for we will suppose that you are a believer in Christ,) that God had ordained this affliction for your spiritual and everlasting well-being, you deemed it, perhaps, an intimation of your lukewarmness in religion. Your conscience may have reproached you with many short-comings, which you were ready, in your subdued state, to acknowledge and confess. Your penitence was deep and sincere, and you resolved, in the invoked presence of your Redeemer, that you would henceforth and forever devote yourself more closely and unreservedly to him, if he would hear your prayers and bring you consolation under affliction. You have pleaded with God earnestly, holding up his precious promises. And in the peace which flows from such striving, you have found such cheering answer to your prayer of faith, that you have vowed to put your trust in him forever. You have said with the Psalmist, "I will love the Lord, because he hath heard the voice of my supplication." Soon, however, the edge of your grief is blunted by time and the cares and occupations of life. You have mingled in the society of the cheerful and the gay, and have regained your wonted composure. You have forgotten to mourn. And have you also forgotten to pay your vows? Can you say with the Psalmist, "Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now, O Lord, I have kept thy law?" Can you give such evidence of a settled determination to pay what you have vowed unto the Lord? Or do you, now he is no longer necessary as a Comforter, forget him as a Redeemer and Master? Instead of coming before him with frequent offerings of thanksgiving for the support which he gave you in time of trouble, do you grow more and more neglectful of prayer, and think less and less of eternal things? In short, are you growing less pious, instead of more pious, every day? If so, you need the solemn warning of scripture—the earnest exhortation of the Preacher, "Pay that which thou hast vowed."

These are not uncommon cases, my Christian friends. May we not venture to affirm that such have come within your observation, if not your experience? Has not peril of life either by

sickness or what is called accident, brought you to the strong cry for divine help, and the suddenly formed purpose of seeking divine favour by submission to the divine law? Has not the deep sighing of the soul in sorrow gone up heavenward in the language of solemn promise, of an earnest vow, that demands a holy life—a constant striving to do the will of God?

If, in the book of God's remembrance, there be any such record against you, see to it that the pledge of your soul be redeemed. For God cannot be deceived, and will not be mocked.

But let us pass on to other more common occasions on which religious purposes are formed and deliberately expressed, but which are not faithfully kept.

We notice the soul's awakenings under the influence of divine truth set forth by the ministers of Christ.

The word of God, we will suppose, has been preached to you with power and directness, and the Holy Spirit has pointed its truths so well, and made them so plain and effectual, that you have, (while warmed and melted by their influence,) made a silent and secret, but solemn vow to God, that you would acknowledge the Saviour, and submit to all the requirements of his holy and precious religion. The Holy Spirit has so "taken of the things of Christ, and shown them unto you," so convinced you of sin, that you have listened with thankfulness and concern to the offer of pardon and holiness made known in the gospel, and have resolved to embrace it. *Then* salvation was nigh unto you, and you might have laid hold on it—then you vowed to God that you would be no longer a rebellious and unpardoned sinner, but would flee directly to the ark of safety, the church of the living God. You resolved to give up your unbelief, your pride, and love of sin—to cast away all self-dependence, all fear of man, and to throw yourself upon the tender mercy of God, trusting in the assurance that, "He who inhabits the high and holy place dwells also with the humble and contrite spirit."

Such was your determination while the Holy Spirit was striving with you—while you were yet under the power of the gospel preached to you. But as soon as you had returned to the business or pleasures of life, you entirely forgot the impressions which you received, and the resolution which you formed; you forgot not merely your vows to God, but likewise God himself, your Al-

mighty Creator and merciful Redeemer. This may have been the case with you more than once—God may have been graciously pleased to strive with you repeatedly, notwithstanding your neglect and unfaithfulness. Yet, remember, that, although he is patient and long-suffering, he “will not be mocked.” Therefore, call to mind, and consider your past opportunities, and the use which you have made of them, and pay your vows unto the Lord your God, lest he turn away his face from you forever.

Make a public profession of your faith in Christ, if you do indeed believe in him, and by a diligent improvement of the means of grace, strive to become confirmed in faith and holiness, that you may be the sons of God and heirs of eternal life.

These are some of the special and occasional instances of unpaid vows, which we commend to your careful consideration. They may be brought home to the consciences of some who hear us. If so, may the Holy Spirit accompany them with his special grace.

But there are some vows which few of you have not made—we mean those taken in baptism. These bind the souls of many, who live as if they had never recognised the obligation.

Most of you, my hearers, have taken upon yourselves the baptismal vows. Some of you have, perhaps, been baptized into the church of Christ at mature age, and have, therefore, solemnly made the vows in your own name. You cannot hesitate to acknowledge that you are bound to pay them. And what is the nature and force of the baptismal vows? What change in the state of mind and heart do they imply? What exhibition of character do they demand of the person assuming them? Let us look at the office for baptism in our prayer book for an answer to these questions. The adult candidate promises in the presence of Almighty God to “renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the sinful desires of the flesh,” at the same time professing to “believe all the articles of the Christian faith, and declaring a steadfast purpose, by divine help, obediently to keep God’s holy will and commandments.” The benefit of the rite depends on (what the church positively requires,) repentance and faith on the part of the recipient. The office for baptism plainly proceeds on the supposition that the person about to be baptized,

has such preparation for it. And the catechism, which contains a distinct explanation of the church's doctrine, declares the requisites for baptism to be, "repentance whereby" the candidates "forsake sin, and faith whereby they steadfastly believe the promises of God made to them in that sacrament."

The call of Christ to all the world, is, "Repent, believe, and be baptized." The sinner must come to the door of the church, the holy font, repenting and believing. And the church tells you what interpretation she puts on this language, when she bids the person about to be baptized, renounce not only all sin, but such worldly things as have a sinful tendency—snares which entrap the heart—beguilements which entice it away from holiness. And this she does with good warrant of scripture, to which her appeal always lies.

The vows of baptism, then, imply a renunciation of every thing which interferes with personal holiness; not only of open sin, but likewise of eager lust after such worldly living as chokes the good seed of divine truth, and prevents its growth.

We would say, therefore, to those who have taken upon themselves the baptismal vows, be careful to make good use of the helps which God has given you, to promote that growth in holiness which you promised to seek. Strive by his grace to walk in his ways all your life. Pay all that you have vowed.

But most of you were baptized in infancy or early childhood, before you could appreciate the importance of the rite to which you were admitted, or the obligations pertaining to it. By that rite you were received into covenant with Christ; the *benefits* depending on your faithfulness in fulfilling the requirements of the covenant. The baptismal vows were made in your name, and for your good. Are not these vows binding on you? And will you not recognise and assume them? Virtually and morally they are yours.

Have you not impliedly promised to take upon yourselves these obligations imposed by the act of your sponsors? Have you redeemed this promise? Have you ratified and confirmed their act in the solemn and apostolical rite of confirmation? Do you confess your Saviour in the holy sacrament of the supper? Are you striving to secure for yourselves all the benefits that may accrue to those who faithfully discharge all the obligations which bap-

tism imposes? If not, you need to be admonished continually of your neglect, and to be exhorted to "pay that which you have vowed."

The words of our text address themselves to all who have professed to be followers of Christ. All such have vowed to serve and glorify him, vowed to set him before them as a holy pattern, and to make his will their rule of life. Are you mindful of your obligation voluntarily assumed? Have you endeavoured to make good your solemn pledge?

In a more special sense, perhaps, the injunction will apply to you, my Christian brethren, who have long been professors. You must have been at times conscious of many failings, been rebuked by the searching Spirit of God, through his word, for shortcomings. Under such rebukes you have penitently resolved to make new and greater efforts to keep the law of God. You have vowed to lead a more godly life—vowed this solemnly and prayerfully—written the vow in tears—sealed it at the holy communion of the Lord's Supper. It stands on the record of God's book of remembrance. Has it passed away from your memory? Is it still unfulfilled? Take heed to yourselves. Be not familiar with broken vows. It is the worst form of spiritual declension. "Pay that which thou hast vowed."

Finally, my hearers of every class, be careful how you bind your souls by vows to the Lord your God. "Be not hasty to utter any thing before God, but when thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it." For he to whom you have vowed is faithful to keep all his promises, even to your eternal reward or condemnation.

SERMON XVIII.

“Work out your salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who worketh in you to will and to do, of his good pleasure.”—PHILIPPIANS ii. 12, 13.

THERE is a beautiful harmony and a perfect consistency in the doctrines of the Christian religion, as will be manifest to those who view the New Testament as a whole, comparing scripture with scripture, and interpreting portions seemingly contradictory according to the proportion of faith. But if any choose detached texts and use them to support favourite systems, they may easily find a showy proof for opposite doctrines. Thus they who run into extremes maintain, on the one hand, that man has no power to do the work of preparation for heaven, else the doctrine of grace cannot stand; and on the other, that he has power to do it without help, and so the work of grace is unnecessary. But the true scheme of redemption through Christ, recognises the necessity of divine grace, and of human co-operation in the work of complete salvation. And it seems as if St. Paul had, in the words of our text, brought the two doctrines, supposed by many to be inconsistent with each other, into close contact, in order to show in the most striking manner their perfect harmony.

Let us look at the text, and see what truth it contains. We find at first view a plain injunction to do what we are supposed not to be able to do, viz. “to work out our own salvation.” Now what does St. Paul here mean? Does he authorize men to trust in their own merits for salvation, to live in the neglect of those provisions of grace which we are wont to call the Christian scheme of redemption? Is the necessity of Christ’s mediatorial sacrifice denied, faith in his inestimable merits made of no effect? Are

his ordinances repudiated, his gifts scorned or deliberately dispensed with? Can all this or aught of it be alleged against one who so often declares that he preaches Christ crucified, and that he will suffer the loss of all things for Christ's sake, for whom he endures all manner of reproach and suffering? He who declares that "by grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God," that through repentance and faith in Christ we obtain remission of our sins, does he bid men reject a Saviour, and trust to their own arm for salvation? He who preaches so constantly, fervently, and eloquently, the riches of that grace which provided and set forth a vicarious atonement, the Lamb of God, slain for the sins of the world, to make reconciliation with God for his rebellious creatures; does he instruct man how to justify himself in the sight of God, bidding a corrupt heart maintain its innocence, and challenge the approval of infinite holiness?

The pains-taking, self-denying bearer of the offence of the cross, in labours, watching and fasting, amid perils by land and sea, and persecutions of various kinds for Christ's sake, has he become the advocate of the opinion that we can trust in natural innocence and power to keep the whole law of God? The baptized convert, who calls upon his former brethren in the faith to abandon their cherished hopes, and to repent and be baptized into the name of Christ, for the remission of sins, can he be deemed a denier of the efficacy of baptism, which he ever calls the laver of regeneration, the very fount of spiritual life? Or, he who received "from the Lord," the holy ordinance of the Supper, which he calls "the communion of the body and the blood of Christ," (whereby we are strengthened in the spiritual life begun in us at baptism;) can this apostle of a religion so full of means of grace, of ordinances by which it is conveyed to the believing soul, exhort men to strive after holiness, trusting in their own strength, heedless of the suggestions of the Holy Spirit?

This were indeed a wonder; yet the apostle says: "Work out your own salvation," and he adds, "with fear and trembling." Why so, if he does not mean that we are to depend on our own natural power? For otherwise, if divine grace is our dependence, what reason have we to fear and tremble?

We may answer this question when we have considered who

they are that the apostle exhorts in the words of our text. Who then are they? They are converts to the Christian religion, received into the fold of Christ by baptism, and hence, avowed members of his body the church, partakers of the benefits of his ordinance.

To such as these the exhortation is addressed, not to men who have rejected Christian privileges, and are living in unbelief. And these he bids "work out their own salvation with fear and trembling." And on what ground? Because they are without the help of grace? Oh no;—but because they have it. His reason for the exhortation is as plain as the exhortation itself. "For it is God who worketh in you to will and to do, of his good pleasure." This seems strange, "For if God be for us, who shall be against us?" Would it not rather be regarded as a reason for great confidence? Such would be the natural conclusion.

But we must first ascertain what kind of fear the apostle had in mind when he wrote the exhortation. And to this end, we may consider from what quarter danger is to be apprehended by the Christian, sustained by this assurance of divine help in all his spiritual strivings. Dangers innumerable beset the believer in his course through life. Temptations throng around his path; for Satan is a wily foe, and spreads his snares continually. The wicked who hate religion, and the freethinkers who despise and deride it, are constantly combining their forces to draw away the professor from his creed, and his consistent walk. Afflictions try him hard, and persecutions harder, perhaps:—and human nature is frail. Against these and other assaults upon his faith, the Christian is required to struggle.

But these are spiritual foes, from whose assaults he is protected by that very grace spoken of in the text, as a reason for "working out our salvation with fear and trembling." The fear and trembling could have no place with reference to the adversaries of a faith sustained by divine help. With this aid and support, the believer may contend boldly, trusting in the scripture promises. The same apostle furnishes a good illustration of the confidence which may be reasonably felt by the servant of the Lord, when he says:—"Who is he that shall harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" Truly the faithful Christian has laid hold on One mighty to save; One who is able to keep him from falling;

and notwithstanding all the trials of life, to present him faultless before the throne of God. He fears not adversaries then, while he feels assured of his Lord's protection. Let him have this assurance and he can boldly face all his foes. But the greater his dependence upon this divine grace, the more fearful would he be of being deprived of it, and left defenceless. Hence we perceive the aim of the apostle, when he suggested that the work of salvation should be engaged in with fear and trembling. The fear refers to the possibility of losing the favour of God, and forfeiting the grace which had been pledged to him.

What can be more natural and direct than such a conclusion from the argument of the apostle? "For if God works in us to will and to do, of his good pleasure," how humbly should we labour in the perfecting of ourselves in righteousness, knowing that it is not by our own might that we can accomplish the work.

The fear intended by the text, therefore, has in it nothing like terror, but a trembling solicitude, lest the grace of God should have been bestowed in vain. And with much reason should every believer entertain such a solicitude. For he knows the rule of God's requirements, that to whom much grace is given, of him will much fruit be demanded. And a further testimony of divine strictness is given in that scripture, which, in the form of a parable, declares how God takes away from the slothful, to give more to the diligent. He that misused the one talent was compelled to surrender it; and as God's gifts are not to be wasted, it was committed to the diligent cultivator of the ten talents.

There is occasion for constant solicitude, on the part of every sincere believer in the doctrine of divine grace, bestowed as a necessary help. And kindred exhortations to that of our text are abundant in the apostolic writings. Of this kind is that of St. Peter:—"Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure." If God had pledged his grace unconditionally, it would be a different case. Frail man might slumber at his post, so long as there was a heavenly watchman guarding him. But the times and the seasons are the Lord's. He waits not man's convenience, but gives when he will, and withholds when it may please him; as the apostle declares in the text, when he says that "God worketh in us according to his good pleasure."

Our text, then, is addressed to the believer in Christ, and he

alone has any right to apply it to himself. He who rejects Christian grace cannot presume to work out his salvation at all. And he who acknowledges it, should work with diligence and solicitude, lest he lose the chief strength which fits him for the task.

We may learn from the exhortation which we have considered, that the Christian state is not one of perfect security. The promises of God indeed fail not. The seals of grace are sure. God never fails to keep his pledge to the soul of the trusting believer in his word. Work then, Christian, for your soul's complete establishment in holiness. Put on the armour of God and fight the good fight.

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is proposed to mankind, not as an end to be attained in time, for the soul's comfort at the hour of death, but as a means by which they may be enabled to lead a holy life, and prepare the soul for its high destiny in another world. That world will be the scene of final retribution. And perfect salvation consists in a meetness for that inheritance which is promised to the faithful. There is, then, much for a Christian to do in the work of his salvation, though when he has done all that he could do, there is no room for boasting.

We perceive, therefore, the harmony and consistency of the Christian doctrines. Man is represented as so sinful that he cannot appear free from guilt in the sight of God, until he has been cleansed by the blood of a crucified Saviour. And when thus purged from his old sins, he cannot keep himself free from continual pollution, without the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit.

This is promised to all who truly submit to Christ's ordinances, and strive to obey his moral precepts. With God's armour in his hand, the believer must wage war with sin continually—with his loins girded with the sustaining promises of Christ, he must run the Christian race. The crown is placed at the goal. Whatever may be your success, be humble. For if you do well, remember in whose strength you have laboured,—and if not well, consider whose gracious help you have slighted. "Work out your own salvation, then, with fear and trembling." Bow meekly to the divine appointment of a crucified Saviour; and through faith in him receive the pledges of effectual grace,—the holy sac-

raments which he has ordained; and then strive diligently to work the works of righteousness,—to exhibit the Christian spirit, and in all your life, to show forth the praise of the gospel, the honour and glory of your Almighty Lord, and blessed Redeemer.

Our text, it will be clearly perceived, is addressed to the professed believer in Christ, and he alone has a right to make a personal application of it. He who rejects Christian grace cannot, without peril, presume to work out his salvation at all. Yet there are many, doubtless, who will be ready to appeal to this Scripture for a justification of their indifference to the claims of the gospel.

It is natural to man to trust in himself—and they who find it irksome to yield to the requirements of a positive system, (such as Christ has established,) are prone to listen to any text that may seem to warrant their rejection of his ordinances. What can be more agreeable to them, than the injunction,—supposing it applicable to their case,—“to work out their own salvation?” They overlook the qualifying clause—“with fear and trembling” deeming it, perhaps, a caution not needed by persons of their temperament. But how wretchedly they deceive themselves! How far short of salvation must they fall! For what is salvation? Not surely a mere hope of doing as well as human frailty will permit, but peace with God in this world, and acceptance with him in the world to come. Every man must stand before the tribunal of Christ, at the day of judgment, to give an account of his stewardship. And he will be judged according to the law which has been revealed to him. Imagine, then, the moral man who, (slighting the testimony which God has given of his Son Jesus Christ,) has presumed to count upon his own merits as an acceptable offering; imagine such a one called before the judgment seat of Christ. Hear his arrogant plea for divine favour: “Just and righteous God! Thou gavest me reason and conscience; sense to discern between good and evil; power to choose the one, and avoid the other. I have striven to do thy will. But thou hast made me frail; and I trust to thy mercy for pardon of my sins and short-comings. Here is the account of my many virtues, of my acts of justice and benevolence. Give me thy favour and approval.”

What says the answer from the great tribunal? "I gave thee reason—(for what,) to discern the truth of my revelation through Christ Jesus; and conscience—(for what,) to guide thee to submission to its authority. That revelation teaches the way of becoming acceptable to God. It declares faith in Christ to be the only way of approach to the Father against whom thou hast rebelled. The works which He requires can be done only through faith in his Son, the appointed Saviour of all who believe. The frailty which hinders perfect obedience, has a ready and sufficient help in the promised gift of the Holy Spirit. Thou hast rejected the Saviour who alone could deliver thee from the sinfulness which made all thine actions unacceptable—and hast despised the grace which could alone make any efforts to serve God effectual. By thine own merits thou didst hope to stand. In judgment thereon thou must fall. Depart into everlasting banishment from the presence of an offended Judge."

In what a strong contrast appears the faithful follower of Christ, who finds an advocate in his Judge. He who trusted in his Saviour for justification and sanctification, during a life of trial on earth, now gives him glory before the hosts of heaven. Casting himself at the foot of the throne, he offers to the Lamb of God a soul, once polluted, but now washed in his precious blood. The testimony which the ransomed one gives to the power of faith, is clear and strong. "Glory be to thee, O gracious and mighty Saviour, for thine inestimable love! Through faith in thine atoning sacrifice, and through the power of thy grace, I have been sustained in all my efforts to keep thy commandments. Thou gavest me the sword of the Spirit, with which to fight my spiritual foes. Behold the number vanquished by thy might! Thou gavest me strength to endure the trials of the Christian race. Behold the trophies which show forth thy glory! Thou hast promised an enduring crown. In thy word I have trusted, and still trust. Lord, receive me into thy blessed inheritance!!"

Ah! well does Christ know his own! They who thus approach him in the day of final account, will be ushered into exceeding glory, receiving the marked approval, and the glad welcome of the Lord whom they have honoured. To each one he will say, "Thou hast well done the work which I have given thee to do. Enjoy the fulness of salvation at the right hand of thy Lord."

Such be our work and our glory! Such, my dear hearers, be the hope in which you strive after the unfading crown! Let no vain delusion carry you headlong to destruction—no false trust betray you into the power of that terrible jailer, who keeps the prison of the damned! Build not on the sandy foundation of your own supposed merits—you will be crushed by the fall of your own work.

Remember that the words of our text were not spoken to those who had not professed to believe in Christ, but to those who had put on Christ in baptism,—and had staked their hopes of salvation on his precious promises, which they heartily received. They had been brought within the fold—the church—trusting in the merits of their Lord, for pardon and acceptance. They were justified by faith: and being justified, “they had peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” To them the voice spake, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,” lest the grace which works with you, should be withdrawn.

But will you, who have not been justified in God’s sight, who have not bowed the knee to the one only Saviour, presume to take comfort from this language of the Apostle? Oh no. Bring yourselves, first, within its reach, and then apply it to yourselves. Let Christ be your only hope of justification. Cast yourselves upon his mercy, looking to him as the great propitiation—the eternal sacrifice for sin. Declare yourselves believers by submitting to his ordinances; and then, laying your first work on his merits, as a sure foundation, strive to build yourselves up by the help of his continual grace, spiritual temples fit for the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. Let all your works as religious beings, “begun, continued, and ended in him,” show forth his praise on earth; they will finally be acknowledged by Him when he calls his own ransomed ones to share his glory.

SERMON XIX.

“Didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? From whence then hath it tares?”—
MATTHEW xiii. 27.

THESE questions were put to the cultivator of a field by his servants, who were surprised to find tares growing in the midst of wheat. And they are found in a parable which our Lord spake to his disciples, and which he afterwards explained to them. Having his own interpretation, we not only cannot err, in this case, but we may use it as a guide in our attempts to explain other parables. The parable is this:—“The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man who sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them? Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say unto the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn.”

In treating of this parable, we remark in the first place, that the kingdom of heaven is the church of Christ, as it is set forth to view, in its character, condition, conflicts, and final triumph. For such is the meaning of the phrase as used by our Lord in his discourse with his disciples. And the church is likened to the field in which good seed had been sown by him to whom it be-

longed, but in the midst of which his enemy had secretly cast seed which brought forth worthless fruit. The parable deserves and will repay a close attention. Let us first hear our Lord's own explanation of it.

“He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them who do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”

This interpretation, properly understood, must be the true one. And there have been two different views of it, which have been taken by Christians in all ages, and which have, in the early history of the church, been exhibited in strong and exciting contrast. The great dispute turns on the words, “The field is the world.” They who insist that the church on earth should consist only of those who will belong to the church in heaven, (that is, that the visible church seen by men, and the invisible church known only by God, are one and the same,) maintain, that as the field is the world in which the Son of man sowed the good seed, only the good seed can be the church of Christ. On the other hand, it is contended with much force of reason, that our Lord is evidently speaking of his church, and is warning his disciples of what might greatly surprise them if they were not warned of it, that his church would not be wholly free from evil in this world. No special teaching was needed to assure them, that in the world there would always be a mixture of good and evil. But they would be so little prepared to find the same mixture in the church, that when the evil should appear, they might fear that the promises of God had failed. To prepare his disciples for that which would greatly perplex and offend them, the working of the mystery of iniquity, and to direct them how to act under such a trial, this parable was evidently designed.

As the drag-net to which the church was also likened, brought

to shore fishes good and bad, so the field, planted by the Lord with the good seed, would be found to contain some worthless grain, in the raising of which he had no hand. The whole drift of the parable was upon the church, and such has been the most common view of it. The first signal case of a wrong view of it, occurred in the early part of the fourth century, when the schism of the Donatists disturbed the church in Northern Africa. The schismatics contended in the course of their dispute, that the church in Africa had lost the Holy Ghost, and for want of holiness had ceased to be a true church. The origin of the schism, was the alleged irregularity of certain ordinations; this brought up the unholy character of certain bishops, and the separation from the Catholic church was justified, on the ground that holiness was the essential and exclusive mark of the church. But this is not true. Holiness is indeed one of the marks of the true church, as we profess in our creed. We "believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church." The church must inculcate holiness, however she may fail to secure it. But its catholicity is as necessary a condition as its holiness. This, the Donatists had not. And this is wanted by some in our own day who look upon the church as not holy enough, and therefore keep aloof from it. But we have no reason to expect that the church will be better than our Lord represented it. And we shall take his own account of it, as the foundation for such propositions as we may lay down upon the subject presented by the text.

We remark in the first place, that the mixture of evil with good, within the limits of the church, does not in any degree weaken its claim to be a true church.

And secondly, that observed or suspected evil is no excuse for neglecting or refusing to become members of the church.

1st. The mixture of evil with good in the church, does not weaken its claim to be regarded as a true church. We may be sure of this, for Christ himself described the church as destined to contain persons, whose character would not warrant their reception into the kingdom of the redeemed in heaven. A church which exhibits these characteristics as laid down by our Lord, if in all external matters complete, must be that which he established. It would be strange, indeed, if the very feature which he expressly pointed at in his prophetic description of his church, as it would

appear in time to come, should be a token of false claim to genuineness. And it matters not whether the evil be that of hypocrisy or delusion, or the yielding of frailty to besetting temptation, the true lines of outward demarkation are not altered by it. A valid ministry, valid sacraments, and a pure apostolic creed, setting forth sound doctrine, and wholesome precept—these, with unity and catholicity, settle the claims of a Christian communion to be a part of the true church.

Great errors and gross corruption have in all ages, from the earliest times, after the apostles, crept into the Christian church. And the pious servants of the Lord have often uttered in earnest prayer the demand of our text, Lord, “didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?” When wickedness of all kinds first made its appearance in the visible church, they who had heard the apostles speak of it as to be presented before God, “glorious, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing,” must have been surprised and perplexed. And zealous for God’s honour and the glory of his Son, they might well ask, How can these things be? Who is accountable for these things? Didst not thou, O Lord, make thy church pure and holy? And is not the doctrine of the church such as should produce only fruits of righteousness?

Hear the reply of the divine householder: “An enemy hath done this.” It is not the result of mere human weakness, which of itself, unless helped always by the strength of God, would come short of the mark set up for the Christian aim; but it is the work of the great enemy of man, not of Jesus the Saviour of man. That enemy is the devil—who first tempted man to sin, and between whom and the Son of Man there is always enmity, as was declared at the time of man’s temptation and fall. The harmony of the prophetic and the historic Scriptures is kept up in this, as in every other respect. The promised Redeemer was directly confronted with the predicted adversary. No sooner did Jesus, the Son of God, come to be the Saviour of man, than the devil came to withstand him. And do we not see the mysterious wisdom of God in this? Jesus was led by the Spirit, not the evil spirit, but the Holy Spirit, to be tempted of the devil. So we read in the Gospel of St. Mark. But the same Spirit gave him the victory, and will give every tempted believer in Christ the victory, through faith in him.

We must not shut our eyes to this teaching of Scripture, for it meets us often—that only by divine permission, does Satan work. God chooses that the victory over this enemy of Christ, and of man's salvation, should be a moral one. Could the church expect to be exempt from the temptation which assailed its divine Founder? And did not the same wicked tempter who tried his firmness, seek the ruin of his cause by the overthrow of his apostles? Did he not destroy one of them, the traitor Judas? And did he not seek the overthrow of one other, whom Christ prayed for, the eager, boasting, denying, but afterwards confessing and faithful Peter?

St. Paul, too, had a messenger of Satan—a thorn in the flesh, sent to buffet him, but for a wise and wholesome purpose—"lest he should be exalted above measure." So may God overrule all the works of Satan, for good to the church. The apostles not only felt the conflict with the enemy of souls, but constantly and earnestly warned their converts of their danger, in the strife to which they were called. Not only did they exhort to self-examination and self-control, with the assurance that "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit," but they recognised the ceaseless and fierce warfare of the Prince of darkness. "For we wrestle not with flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world." And he who goeth about "like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour," also takes the form of an angel of light, with a view of deceiving the very elect. When, therefore, they who look at the corruptions of the church with a jealous regard for the honour of Christ, ask anxiously, "Whence hath it tares?" the answer may be read by them in the prophecy and the history of the devil's strife with Christ and the people whom he came to save. And if they who gloat over the defilements which are gathered up in church history, to gratify the pride and malevolence of a scoffing world, would only regard this mixture of the tares with the wheat, as one of the signs of the true church, and urge the best of those who are out of the pale of it to union with it, and faithful devotion to it; they would do the world more service, and themselves more credit.

Some zealous people there are always, who ask, as the servants asked the householder, "Wilt thou then, that we go and gather them up?" much in the same spirit with Elias, which James and John

also manifested, when they said to Jesus, "Wilt thou, then, that we command fire to come down from heaven and destroy them?" This cutting off from the church of Christ by the strong arm of power, leaving the offender no room for repentance, is too serious a matter to be in the hands of zealots. It may do for societies of human origin to make or unmake members at will—to discard as easily as to receive them,—but when a repentant sinner has once been made a member of Christ's church, and child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven, it is not a light thing to cut him off from the ordained channels of the influence of the Holy Ghost, the seals and pledges of a Saviour's grace. If he grossly offends against Christian morals, he may be put under discipline, be suspended from church privileges, till he gives evidence of true penitence and reformation. But not until he abjures the faith, or becomes incorrigibly wicked, should he be excommunicated: so long as he does not despise and blaspheme the Spirit of God, let that Spirit strive with him, within the pale of the church, where the holy influence, sent by the Saviour, specially works. Let the tares grow with the wheat until the harvest, when Christ will separate them according to his righteous judgment. If Christ was a true prophet, the militant church can never be as pure as the church triumphant.

But we must hasten to our second point, viz., that observed or suspected evil in the church is not a good excuse for refusing to become members of it.

If the tares are ever to be found in the midst of the wheat, and both are to grow together until the harvest, till the one is ripe for destruction, and the other for salvation, then they seek to be wiser than Christ, who, on account of a supposed want of holiness in the members of the church, would withdraw from it, and remain isolated, or set up a church for themselves. As a matter of fact, we have yet to learn that those who have set up new communions, have more holiness than the church has, with all her tares.

And, leaving out of sight for the present, the breach of the unity of the church, the guilt of which Christ will determine, look at the dangerous tendency of the feelings and notions which cause the schism. Every Christian has in himself the same mixture of good and evil, which gives to the church such a pie-bald appear-

ance, as its history is unfolded. In every one the warfare is maintained between the flesh and the Spirit. And they, whose holiness is offended by what they see in the church, may cherish such spiritual pride as will lead them into a snare. They must learn to look upon themselves, and their communion as free from all dross, or they cannot consistently stay where they are. And the devil always stands ready to catch those who think themselves good enough, and strong enough, to do without Christ. Satan's enmity is against Christ, because Christ is mighty to save. And when he can persuade men to cast away any of the armour of God, any of the ordinances and appointments of Christ, he does his great conquering enemy an injury, while he entraps the unwary, who should submit to their Captain in all things.

But leaving these, we pass to those who make no religious profession. It is not an uncommon thing for these to point to examples of evil living in church members, or the sudden fall of any of them from a high position in the church, and use it as a justification of their irreligion. We do not believe, say they, that the religious profession is any security for a life of godliness. For we find wicked men among those who are esteemed patterns of propriety. But to these we say, that hypocrites may long lurk in the church, where the commandments of God are steadily read and enforced, and the church may not detect them. And when they are exposed to public gaze, their long concealed wickedness is no reproach to the communion in which they professed religion, if they there had right teaching.

Fellow members will mourn over an erring brother, and feel the wound given to Christ by one of his avowed friends. But the wickedness of one member, however well instructed he may have been, cannot so infect the whole body, as to make it offensive to God; and surely it should not be so to men. No; examples of departure from strict morals in the case of a few individuals, may be owing to great weakness of purpose, and great neglect of the ordinary means of grace.

They, who have been truly pious, may grieve the Holy Spirit, and cause the withdrawal of his holy influence. If they do, and lose their piety and their virtue, is it any justification to those who, on that account, distrust the religious profession altogether? Surely not.

Great allowance must be made, too, for the false tests of religion, which are sometimes proposed. If mere feeling is made the test, without principle, or well established doctrine, no blame can be cast upon divine appointments. Can there be the requisite safeguards to a professor of the Christian faith, who is not duly instructed in Christian morals? Now, we have known persons, not of the church, who, although they had for years been "professors of religion," in the common acceptation of the term, seemed never to have heard or read the ten commandments.

They who have no liturgy for guidance in worship, may be taught all kinds of error by the prayers of their ministers. They who recite no creed in their worship, may forget the creed which they once professed, if they ever had one. They who never read, or hear the ten commandments, may learn to look upon the moral law as a great restraint upon the liberty of the saints. We do not boast, for we have our share of tares, perhaps, growing with the wheat. But with a liturgy breathing throughout a spirit of piety, speaking sound doctrine, and inculcating godly living, it will be the fault of each individual worshipper who uses it, and not that of the church, which framed and established it, if he err either in doctrine or morals. There are some, perhaps, who look with secret satisfaction upon the sins of professing Christians, even while they pretend to be shocked at their inconsistency. We turn these over to an almost forlorn hope of the grace of God for future amendment.

But to those who keep aloof from the church, because her present members are not what they should be, we would propose the simple question:—If there is so much evil in the church, which has privileges not given to the world, how much more evil would there be in the world, if there were no church? And then we put another closer one: If you reject the offered privileges of the church, and lose your own soul, will it be any comfort to know that you did so, because this man was a hypocrite, and that man a deluded enthusiast or fanatic? When you shall have answered these questions to your own heart, you may be moved to come into full communion of the church of our blessed Lord, there to strive, by the help of his grace, so to adorn your profession, that you may at last be gathered as wheat into his heavenly garner. That this may be the happy lot of us all, may God of his mercy grant, for the sake of our only Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

SERMON XX.

“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”—JOHN xvii. 20, 21.

THIS is a part of the last prayer which Jesus offered up with his disciples, before his crucifixion. He had just finished his last discourse to them, which is so full of consolation—and now he prays earnestly for them, and for all his church in time to come. And mark the character of his prayer! How full of anxious desire for the enlargement and the unity of His church!—and how closely these two subjects are connected together! He prays that they all may be one. And why does he pray thus? “That the world may believe that thou hast sent me,” that the world, seeing the disciples of Christ thus united in mind and in heart, in faith and in feeling—may be led to embrace the Christian religion, as indeed a divine revelation of mercy to man. But the professed disciples of Christ are not one in mind and heart, in faith and communion; and chiefly in consequence of this, the world does not believe that Christ was sent from God.

There is nothing that tends more to encourage infidelity, and stay the progress of the gospel on its way through the earth, than the dissensions of those who call themselves Christians. Christ’s ultimate object is defeated, because one of the means by which it was to be accomplished, is, through the misconduct of his professed followers, not supplied.

The time was, in the history of the church, when the peace and harmony of its members attracted the admiration of unbelievers, and the common expression of it was, “See how these Christians love one another!” And they only exemplified the

rule of charity which their Master laid down. But can this character be given them now? Do they not rather cast stumbling-blocks in the way of those who are without the church? Are not the various sects often arrayed against each other in bitter strife? Are they not often guilty of comparing each other's claims to holiness, not only invidiously, but contemptuously?

Do they not imitate the Pharisee in his deportment towards the Publican, and thank God that they are not like their neighbours? And would not unbelievers be justified in saying, "See how these Christians hate one another?"

Now if these things are so, can it be reasonably expected that the church will increase much in the face of such obstacles? No, it surely cannot be. And this is a very serious difficulty; for men who are invited to enter a household where discord reigns, will not be satisfied with the assurance that the inmates of that house have pledged themselves to peace. You may tell unbelievers that the gospel teaches all who receive it, to dwell together in harmony; but if while you tell them so, you show by your conduct, that it has not produced the expected fruit, can you wonder that they will not try it? It is indeed no excuse for them, that the professors of Christianity do not exhibit the genuine fruits of the gospel. It does not justify the rejection of a religion that must be judged by its own books. They are bound to look for themselves, and see what the Christian Scriptures command and inculcate.

But while their guilt is not diminished by the bad example of those who represent the Christian religion so unfairly and imperfectly, these last are accountable for keeping men out of the church by their unchristian spirit and conduct. Now what is the cause of this unchristian spirit, which prevails among those who call themselves Christians? Will it be said that all who profess to be Christians, are not in heart what they profess to be; that many are yet unconverted, and show their original corruption? All this may be very true—but this is the ultimate cause of the evil deplored. What is the immediate cause? It is mainly the division into sects—the departure of Christians from the apostolic model of church unity. Rival communions have been set up, and each asserts its claim to be the true church. Now it is impossible to keep up such rivalry without

bitterness of feeling. It will be engendered. And the only cure for the bitterness, is to be found in the removal of the cause—in putting away all divisions, and uniting Christians in one communion. For how, indeed, can those persons cherish towards each other such love as Christ has enjoined, if they are forbidden by sectarian principles from holding communion with each other in religious matters! If, then, men by their voluntary act place themselves in such positions, that they cannot entertain towards each other those feelings which Christ has enjoined, it is obviously their duty to change those positions. Since Christ has commanded them to do certain things, as his disciples, they cannot be excused because they have tied their hands, so that they cannot do them. They must remove all obstructions to the proper discharge of Christian obligations.

The case then is plainly this. Christians are bound by their profession, and the plain injunction of their Lord, to cherish and constantly exhibit love for each other. The divisions which have grown up among them—the various rival communions which are arrayed against each other, prevent the due exercise of that love. Now there is no necessity for such divisions, and there can be no excuse for perpetuating them.

We do not overrate the evil influence of schism. It is very great, and to be deeply lamented. In vain will it be contended, that it is not necessary that there should be unchristian feelings, because there are rival communions. As long as human nature continues to be what it is, and ever has been, such feelings will be roused. And it must be admitted by all, that they do prevail.

Sad though it be for the cause of Christ, the fact cannot be concealed, that the condition of Christendom is anything but what it should be, or what Christ prayed that it might be. So far from exhibiting unity—it seems as if those who call themselves Christians, in this age, and in this country, had tried their skill in making divisions. And a keen observer might almost suppose, on viewing the array of names which designate differences of order and doctrine, that the body of Christ, so called, was, like the body of the man on whom he exerted his miraculous power, possessed by a legion of evil spirits.

Oh that the time would come, when all who profess to be Christ's disciples, might be knit together as members of his one

body, in true fellowship, receiving nourishment from him as the Head. God speed its coming for his own glory!!

It is too commonly believed, or asserted, by way of excuse for schism, that the spirit of rivalry among the different sects, prompting each to exert itself more than the others, serves to bring many to a knowledge of Christ, and to a saving faith in him, who would otherwise never be converted. But this is a mere assumption. We know the power of that zeal which is so much commended, and we know that it is often exerted to make sectarians, rather than Christians. If it were the love of Christ, that prompted the earnest effort to bring men to a religious profession, for the well-being of their souls, would not that same motive urge believers in Christ to make equal efforts in the same communion? This is the true question—not whether rivalry of sectarianism causes great striving to overcome unbelief and irreligion—but whether a holy rivalry of love for Christ, would not induce more successful striving, if all Christians were united in one church, contending together for the faith committed to the church by the apostles of Christ. Would not the ranks of infidelity be thinned faster, and the cause of true religion grow stronger, if the disciples of Christ stood as the acknowledged members of one body, knit together by the joints and bands of those ordinances of Christ which constitute true fellowship? Men who are now clinging to the shreds and fragments of a rent body, presume to doubt this. But Christ surely thought this a clear case when he offered the prayer, that his disciples might be at unity, in order that the world might believe that he came from God. He looked upon unity as the clearest evidence that his followers could give, of the divine origin of his religion, and the most powerful argument and motive that could be presented to the unbelieving world. Strange that any who profess to love him should set up the impious plea for disunion, “that it serves to increase the strength of his cause.”

This plea is not urged by all who add their weight of personal influence to the support and perpetuation of religious division. Many soothe themselves with the reflection, that they take the state of the “religious world,” as they find it—that the Christian religion is professed and inculcated by many organized bodies, each claiming to be a church, and that they feel at liberty to

take their choice of that one, which best suits either their inclination or their convenience. Few, we fear, consider even which would best promote their edification—their growth in holiness—their ripening in the graces which are the fruits of faith—much less inquire, “What constitutes the church of Christ?”

But what advantage does a person derive from uniting with a society of believers, unless by so doing, he joins himself to Christ? And if he seeks union with Christ outwardly—if this be the real object of the professing Christian—then it becomes a matter of fact as well as principle, where he should cast his lot—and he should inquire where a union with Christ may be found. It cannot be a matter of indifference, to what society of Christians a man joins himself, unless it be a matter of indifference, whether or not a man be in fellowship with Christ; because if there is any visible church on earth, it must be able to prove its claim to apostolic origin. For an authority to exercise the Christian ministry, and to use the Christian ordinances, could only proceed from Christ himself, through those to whom he first gave it. If ever that authority was lost, no power on earth could restore it. Hence the body that has it now, must always have had it. That is, it must be able to show a regular transmission of authority from Christ himself. And this, all societies holding Christian doctrines now claim, except those which have the congregational system. Yes; all who hold to ordination by a succession of ordainers, do claim *apostolical* succession, and act upon the principle, however they may deride it, when claimed by others. It becomes then a question of fact—which of the various Christian communions has this transmitted authority from Christ. If all have it, the believer may choose his resting-place according to his taste, or as may suit his convenience, or rather, (on a better principle,) as may best promote his growth in grace. He is bound, at any rate, to inquire earnestly whether all do possess it or not, before he presumes to make a selection of the branch of Christ’s church which he prefers.

But it is melancholy to find that many who do pause to examine the claims of different communions, overlook entirely the very question upon which the decision of every man should be founded. Some regard zeal as the true test; others success; while many think themselves bound in gratitude to join the com-

munion of that society, in whose house of worship they were first awakened to a sense of religion, or were induced to make a profession of faith. This last is a very natural feeling—but it is one that should not be indulged in reference to a matter of such moment. What indeed does it amount to? Is it a reward given to the minister of that society, for his instrumentality in bringing them to the Christian profession? If so, there may be conflicting claims, and it may be hard to decide whose is the greatest. Are the first religious impressions to settle the question of preference, or the influences which caused the convicted man to make a profession? Shall one who has here been convicted of sin, and elsewhere found the peace which he sought, join himself to us, or to the other fold? But what trifling is this! Does the preacher of the gospel convert sinners? We have always thought, agreeably to the word of God, that this was the office of the Holy Spirit. If gratitude is to direct the actions of the believer—let that feeling be shown towards the proper object—to the Holy Spirit, and to Christ who sent that Spirit. And let grateful love to Christ lead the believer to join himself to Christ—to the church, which is his body. He should search for this body of Christ till he find it by its true marks, and cling to it for the love of Christ, and for his own effectual nourishment in spiritual life.

This love of Christ prompts obedience to the whole will of Christ. Union with him and with all believers through him, is a part of that will, shown by his prayers, and his injunctions, and by those of his apostles after him. If, feeling your hopeless, helpless condition, without a Saviour, you have laid hold on the hope set before you in the gospel, you should love and obey him in whom you trust for pardon. This love and this obedience will be shown in making yourselves one with him, by being members of his church, and by feeding on him in his holy sacrament of the Supper. This obedience is both your duty, and your best interest, for by it alone you can be sustained in faith—or indeed make good your claim to that faith which has the promise of salvation.

And will not that grateful devotion to Christ lead you to take some pains to find out what would be most pleasing to him? If he has ever intimated his will in regard to the outward and visi-

ble union with him, is it not right that you should conform to that will? Will you not therefore strive to build up his church—to preserve its unity, for which he so fervently prayed? Will you give any encouragement to the divisions of his body, which lead to manifestations of unholy feelings and tempers, as we have contemplated?

These are questions which every one should put to himself, before he decides to join any religious communion. He should inquire with much earnestness whether he will thereby be united with Christ.

But besides that the division of Christians into sects, leads to a breach of charity, and hence opposes the growth of piety, while it checks the growth of the church in the world, it is contrary to the word of God, which, while it enjoins unity, condemns the breach of it. And this it does directly, as well as by implication. Christ's precepts as well as his prayers, have reference to that oneness of his church which is both its beauty and its strength; and his apostles exhort to it, and rebuke every attempt or desire to break it. Let us look at the Scriptures for our instruction.

Our Lord did not say to his apostles, "Go divide the world into sects, that you may by exciting them to zealous rivalry, spread the gospel more widely and rapidly." He did not say, "Set up the church of Peter, and the church of James, and the church of John, and strive mightily which shall have the greater number of followers." No. He says, "Go make disciples unto me of all nations." He tells them that "there shall be one fold and one Shepherd;" that not even the Jews, who have long been a separate people, shall constitute a separate church in his kingdom; still less that the Gentiles shall be divided among themselves. And he warns them in general terms, of the evil of divisions, saying, "A house divided against itself cannot stand."

Nor did the apostles fail to observe his precepts, and follow his counsel. They all recommend unity of communion as well as unity of faith. Hear how earnestly St. Paul remonstrated with the Corinthians, for falling into dissensions—for showing the same spirit that has led to the evils which we now deplore. "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in

the same mind, and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you?" Now here he beseeches them in the name of Christ, (as if this name was of itself a pledge of unity, and a rebuke of division,) to refrain from setting up rival sects—from ranging themselves under the banners of favourite apostles.

And he afterwards rebukes this same spirit in these words: "Ye are yet carnal; for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?" Now the same rebuke here given to the Corinthian converts, would be deemed by the apostle to be well deserved by many Christians in our own day. Suppose him to address in person, as he does by his epistle, all to whom the rebuke would apply, could they justify themselves? Suppose him to be here on earth, speaking to those who profess to receive his word, and saying, "Ye are yet carnal. For while one of you saith, I am of Calvin, and another, I am of Wesley; are ye not carnal? Is Christ divided? Was Calvin or Wesley crucified for you?" Might he not add, shall they divide what Christ designed to be one, and prayed the Father might ever continue one? Do they think that they are doing Christ service by rending his body, when he prays in the words of our text, that all who should believe on him may be one, as he and his Father are one?

It must be admitted, that God having clearly designed Christian unity, they who violate it, are guilty of great sin. And those who established rival communions, thereby rending the church, which is the body of Christ, and which should be, like his garment, without seam, are answerable for much mischief that has ensued. Now Christians of our own day, who found these communions already established, may say, "We build upon Christ as a foundation, (as did the apostolical church,) and surely we are safe." Admitting that they are safe, that is, ransomed from sin and death by the Redeemer in whom they trust, may they not suffer loss,

for the error which they have committed? All who build on the true foundation do not receive equal favour; for their future condition will depend on what they build. Some may build, on this foundation, gold, silver, or precious stones, while others may build only wood, hay, or stubble; and as St. Paul affirms, the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is. Will it be said that this must refer to moral conduct, to the degree of purity and holiness, or to doctrines engrafted upon the required faith in Christ? We grant that it does; but not to these alone. And who will presume to limit its application? It may well be taken to apply to every act of disobedience to the will of Christ, and any exhibition of disregard to his injunctions.

Now men may believe in all the doctrines of the cross, as they are generally summed up, and may think that they are living in accordance with them, and will therefore be accepted of God in Christ Jesus; and yet may be found guilty of encouraging the dismemberment of Christ's body. They may be found deficient in readiness to learn, and do the whole will of God, and may be told, as was the young man whom Jesus loved for his many good qualities, "One thing thou lackest."

Now this solemn warning should be heeded, even if there were no direct and earnest appeals, which address themselves to the hearts of all who profess to love the Lord Jesus Christ. He prays the Father, in behalf of his apostles, that not only they, but all who should believe on him, through their word, might be united in faith and communion, might be one as he and the Father are one. No union could be closer than this. And what is the reason which he gives for desiring this? Let every Christian consider it well, and keep it ever before him. "That the world may believe that thou hast sent me;" that they may have this clear evidence of the divine origin of my religion, that it has produced union and harmony among all who profess to embrace it.

And now, Christian brethren, what is your duty in reference to existing divisions? Let none who profess to submit to the religion of Christ, violate its precepts or its true spirit. Be careful that you despise not any who differ from you in religious matters, on account of that difference. Neither judge them harshly. So long as divisions exist among Christians in regard to outward communion, they are strongly tempted to a breach of charity.

But while you should not encourage these divisions, you should strive to cherish towards those who honestly differ from you, and attach themselves to other communions, those feelings which Christ has inculcated upon all his disciples. And it is better to pray, after the example of Christ, that they may be one, than to abuse them because they are not. You may strive to lead the wandering into the old paths—for many know them not. But lead them gently, because you love the truth, and desire that they may know and love it, and not because you prefer your own judgment to theirs. Men ought never to be taunted with error. A worldly person would act unwisely, if he hoped to correct by means of taunts; and a Christian would act both unwisely and inconsistently. “In meekness instructing them that oppose themselves,” is the Scripture rule, which should be adopted by all who pretend to teach others. Let all adhere to what they believe to be the truth, seeking instruction, and receiving it willingly and thankfully. And in all your intercourse with Christians of other denominations, show by your deportment, that however you may differ from them in doctrine, you do not entertain towards them unkind feelings. By cultivating towards them a truly Christian spirit, you will the more readily convince them of their error, and will help to remove one of the great stumbling-blocks in the way of the unbeliever, who judges our religion too hastily, perhaps, and unfairly, by what are not its legitimate fruits. May God grant the prayer of Jesus, which all good Christians should earnestly offer, and bring all his followers unto perfect unity and love, for his mercy’s sake.

SERMON XXI.

“Is it well with thee?”—2 KINGS iv. 26.

THIS question was asked, with tender concern, by Elisha, the prophet, of the Shunamite woman, who had been suddenly bereaved of her only child. Her answer, “It is well,” seems to suit her real case as little as any that could have been given. For it is only by ascribing to her a clear forecasting of the divine interposition in her behalf, which she afterwards experienced, that we can reconcile it with truth. Would that all who may be placed in like afflictive circumstances, could give the like answer in truth and soberness, to the same question.

Many may be prompted to say, “It is well,” when their condition, mental or spiritual, is inquired of, either in haste, without self-examination, or to disguise their real state. Some love no companionship in sorrow, and so strive to conceal their wo; while many would hide, even from themselves, the sins which are fast weighing them down to ruin; and from others, the compunctions which give good promise of repentance unto salvation.

Counsel for the afflicted is never out of place, for they who have no present need of it will do well to lay it up for days of darkness. And warnings for the sinful cannot be too often sounded, for these are ever present, and are too prone to slumber, even in the midst of warnings.

The question taken for our text, may be asked with much emphasis in regard to the state of mind under any affliction, and also with reference to the religious character, and the soul’s condition in the sight of God.

1. Let us first speak to the afflicted. And before putting the question to them, let us see what frame of mind will justify the answer, “It is well.”

"It is well" with the afflicted, of whatever kind the affliction may be, when the hand that sends it is duly recognised. The testimony of holy men who have not had the bright and cheering light of Christian truth, has pointed to the heavenly source of affliction. Job was assured by his companion, that "affliction cometh not forth of the dust." And David could utter his firm conviction, under sorrow, that the hand of the Lord was heavy upon him. But the gospel of Jesus Christ can alone give the full assurance of faith, which is necessary to support the heart in the hour of sore trouble. Through a sincere trust in the word of God, therein made known, the sorrowing one may be satisfied that God, for wise and benevolent purposes, dispenses sorrow as well as joy; and may therefore meekly submit to that dispensation whose purpose may not be clearly discerned.

"Well," indeed, it is with the afflicted, when he can discern the hand of God, not only exercising over him a just sovereignty, but leading him, in mercy, through trial and suffering, to a state of spiritual blessedness that will far outweigh the trials. In such case, though he may not be able to read the special object of any particular dispensation, yet as he is assured by the gospel, that affliction is always designed for our ultimate good, it is consolation enough to know, that God has caused his loved and ransomed one to mingle his bread with tears, that he may finally rejoice with the greater joy.

It may be that in the midst of the unmingled sweets of life, he who was an heir of eternal joys, had "forgotten his resting place;" and that God in the fulness of mercy and loving-kindness, has bidden him prepare to "arise and depart, for this is not his place of rest."

The heart that is at ease may be given up to the passing things of earth; and worshipping the creature, may forget the Creator. In this state of forgetfulness of the only proper object of worship and supreme love, the soul rests upon a broken reed, which will one day pierce it with many sorrows; sorrows that spring from human folly, and are therefore bitter, and without remedy. Is it not an act of mercy to break the spell which binds the soul, and set it free? And is it not well with the afflicted who can discern so gracious a purpose in the heaven-sent sorrow? Yes; it is, indeed, well with such a patient, believing sufferer! For, the en-

during crown which is laid up for the pilgrim who perseveres unto the end, will amply repay him for the weariness of the journey.

Afflicted one, whatever be your sorrow, "Is it well with thee?" God grant you such trusting faith and quiet resignation, as will enable you to say, "It is well."

2. The same question may be asked, as a test of religious character, and of the condition of the soul in the sight of God. Consider it seriously, as we put it to several classes of persons.

Is it well with thee, worldly man, absorbed in business or pleasure, living without God, and reckless of religious obligations, or postponing them till the day of death? You may venture hastily to reply, "It is well." And so you may, perhaps, suppose; because you do not think seriously of your destiny. But a wiser than you are, has said for your warning, that "there is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof is death." You may comfort yourself with the reflection, that you may follow your lawful calling with diligence; you deal honestly and fairly with your neighbour, and even try to observe towards him the golden rule. All this seems well, and might be well enough if you had none but your neighbour to consider. But does not your conscience, with which you seem to be on good terms, sometimes whisper to you, that you owe some acknowledgment to the almighty Author, and benevolent Giver of all that you enjoy? Do you not sometimes reflect with apprehension of severe rebuke, for your impiety, that He who gave you life and health, and all the faculties which make life dear to you, is entitled to worship and reverence, to your love and grateful obedience, the consecration of your substance, your time, yea, yourself, soul and body, to his service?

Have you not contemplated, for a moment, the great change which must shortly come over you; the dissolution of the body, and the final judgment that will follow? And is it well with you, if you have done so, (destined as you are to immortality,) with no preparation for the awful realities of another world? Nay; is it well with you, if you have not done so? If you have slept unconcerned amid such appeals to your conscience?

Still more emphatically may we ask you this question, in view of the revelation of God's will through our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the Holy Bible, and particularly in the New Testament, God

has spoken to you plainly of his love towards you, and of his claims upon you. If you neglect to hear this message from God, we pity your weakness and folly, while we mourn for your condemnation. For, whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear, the message which offers you peace, comes from God, and will stand on record for your future judgment. If, then, shutting your ears against the word of God, and steeling your heart against its awful sanctions, and its earnest appeals, you presume to say to yourself, "It is well," we press upon you the affectionate inquiry, with reference to your real condition in the sight of God, *Is it well with you?* Can it be well, when you are slumbering on the brink of destruction? Your very confidence is the surest mark of danger. It is the evident symptom of a flattering but fatal disease. It is the working of that corruption with which the gospel charges you, which the Spirit of God enables you to discover, and which the blood of Christ, through faith, will alone be sufficient to blot out. You must come to this Great Physician, to be healed, that it may indeed be well with you.

It is ill with you now, though you know it not. It will be ill with you at the hour of death, as you will probably know and confess, and ill with you eternally, without hope of remedy, if Christ be not embraced as your mighty and only Saviour.

We speak now to those who are apt to forget that the warnings of the word of God can apply to them; the professed disciples of Christ. Is it well with you, believers in Christ, baptized into him, and sworn to be his faithful followers, if you have done no more than to have made vows of baptism? You have recognised Christ's authority to call you into his vineyard, and you have said outwardly with your lips, "I go." But when he spreads his holy feast before you, and bids you, "Come, partake of the banquet of love, show yourself a member of my body, the church, by feeding on that which is the body's nourishment and life," you decline the gracious invitation, and refuse to be classed with the faithful. You neglect or refuse to take a stand which is known by the world as one of opposition to it, but prefer to be claimed by the world as on its side, because you cannot bear the cross of an avowed submission to the rule of Christ, and trust in his promises. You have given one hand to Christ, and with the other you exchange a friendly grasp with those who hate and scoff at him.

With respect to these two opposing interests, are you content to play the go-between? Will you consent to receive the benefit of a real attachment to the world, while you risk the loss of Christ's favour, and the danger of a heartless covenant with him? Christ says,—“He that is not with me, is against me.” Is it well with you to be counted as one opposed to Christ, while you profess to be on his side? We bid you ask your own heart, and answer the question from the heart. Can your religious state be a wholesome or even a safe one, if you continue this wavering and balancing between devotion to your Saviour, and servitude to his enemies? The contest may not be long maintained: if Christ cannot win you, you will soon be sold into bondage to sin, from which you will never escape. Then say not to yourself, “It is well.” I am in the fold of the Great Shepherd; I have made the Christian profession. For you have only acknowledged that you are bound to be a faithful servant of Christ, to confess him openly and habitually before men. You have admitted that you know your Lord's will. Now he spake your condemnation when he declared that, “the servant who knew his Lord's will and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.” And he has also plainly intimated that the son who said to his father, on being bidden to go into his vineyard:—“I go, sir,” and went not, was in a far worse case than he who said, “I will not,” “but afterwards repented and went.”

Think not, therefore, that while it is ill with your yet unrepentant and obstinate neighbour, it is well with you. But deem it ill with yourself, so long as you fail to (do what you have confessed that you are bound to do,) give up yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ, in a life of godliness, keeping all his ordinances faithfully, and looking to him continually for grace to comfort you, and strength to keep you from falling.

There is a voice of warning, too, for those who have made a full profession of Christian faith in both sacraments of Christ, whether they have grown old in the profession, or have but lately avowed the Lord to be their God, in the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

You, fellow disciples, who have been so long in the enjoyment of the privileges of believers, that you can scarcely even remember the date of your first admission to them, much less the freshness

of your first love to Christ:—"Is it well with you?" Are you growing in the Christian stature, as you grow in years? or do you sometimes feel sensible of dwarfishness, and perceive, on close self-examination, that you have lost much of the strength as well as fervour of love? If so, "be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain and are ready to die." We begin to fall before we are sensible of it. If, then, you know your backsliding, it must be great. "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things."

Do you allow yourself to neglect any of the means of grace, any of the offered opportunities of quickening your zeal, and cherishing your love for Christ, of drawing out your pious feelings, and urging you to greater exercises of practical holiness, on the ground that these, though necessary for the young convert, are not needed by you? If so, it is not well with you; you are fast sinking into a decline, from which it may require the hand of God, heavily laid on you, to recover you.

And to the young converts we would ask,—do you find the exercises of devotion, if not a burden, becoming a formal service which you feel bound to perform, but which you hurry through, in your eagerness to reach the pursuits and gratifications which engross the irreligious? Do you talk loudly of your love for Christ, of the moving of the Holy Spirit to charity, and love of all who name the name of Christ, while you grudge the alms which the church asks at your hands, and spend upon yourselves that which is churlishly withheld from the Lord? Is this your case? And can you say, "It is well with us?" No; lay not this flattering unction to your soul. But rather say with Job, if you feel that you have fallen from grace:—"Oh, that I were as in months past!" And if you know no change in your religious state, cry out with David, "Create in me a clean heart, O God."

And to the young converts who, in the fervour of their first love, sought eagerly every opportunity of satisfying its cravings, but who now allow the fascinations of social pleasure to keep them away from religious ordinances and exercises, we propose the like question. Is it well with you, when you prefer the world to the church? when you allow your duties to Christ, to be set aside on the slightest plea of inconvenience? when you prefer intercourse with the worldly-minded, to near communion with

your Saviour, and joint worship with his faithful disciples? Does your religion live only in the midst of the excited feeling which electrifies the mass? withering and dying when left to the quiet of your own individual purpose of devotion? This is a sad state, if this be yours—and if you know it not, so much the more do you need the caustic application of the word of God, to lay open to you the secret of your spiritual disease. Search your heart closely by the help of God's word. Examine yourselves, whether ye be indeed in the faith—whether you have with purpose of heart resolved to cleave to the Lord.

And to all of you, who profess to be Christians, we give the like counsel. Be diligent in the use of all the means of grace afforded by the church. Trust not to your supposed power to do without them. Trust not your piety, if it does not seek them. But having vowed to serve the Lord in the solemn ordinance of baptism, strive to live near to him in holiness, in prayer, and in the periodical communion with him in his holy life-giving ordinance of the Supper. Fixed habits of devotion are needful. System and method in religious worship are always wholesome. Order and rule with reference to practical piety are greatly desirable. Let your heart be taught to beat by rule,—the rule which Christ has established, of love supreme to God, the Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, of love to your own souls, as his dear purchase; and for your neighbour as yourselves, in grateful return for the inestimable and unbounded love which poured out a peace-offering for our common redemption. Thus living, it will be well with you all in life, and death, and in the day of resurrection.

SERMON XXII.

“What is that to thee? Follow thou me.”—JOHN xxi. 22.

THIS was the rebuke given to the officious Peter, by our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus had just before intimated very clearly to this disciple, that his faith and zeal, of which he had been boastful, would soon be put to the trial—that the duties of the ministry to which he was called, would require him to submit to martyrdom. Having given the prophetic warning of the doom which awaited him Jesus said promptly, “Follow me.”

Peter was not daunted by the view of trials to which he afterwards resolutely submitted. But he could not set about his Master's work till he had given one more display of his inquisitive temper of mind. Turning about and seeing John, he said to Jesus, “Lord, and what shall this man do?” Jesus answered, “If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me.” In other words, you need not concern yourself with the will of God in reference to other men, or any further than it has pleased him to reveal it.

1. See that you obey that will so far as it is made known to you, and thus secure your own well-being.

The language of the text has in it much profitable admonition for many persons in our day, who are called not to any special work in their Lord's service, but faith in him and submission to his ordinances. To the views which we are about to take of the application of our Saviour's words, supposing them to be addressed by him to those classes of persons to which they will properly apply, we beg your careful attention. And may the Holy Spirit bless the word which may be fitly spoken.

The decision of questions of duty in regard to religion is often very much perplexed by the various considerations with which

they are mixed up, growing out of the many relations of life. The ties of kindred and affection which God has ordained for man's comfort and well-being, during this life of trial, (but which often become sources of great suffering and misery,) are sometimes made by man's own folly and obstinacy, fatal hinderances to his spiritual and eternal good. Early habits of association, and the bent of early education, may fix the minds of sinful men, in religious opinions, which the revealed will of God may require them to abandon. The voice of God may have spoken distinctly to some individual, and though unheard by all who are bound to him by tender ties, called him to come out from the midst of worldliness and irreligion, or heresy and schism, and declare for godliness and truth, according to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the testimony of the church. We see such cases often. The call of the gospel is a call to individuals. To every one who comes within its sound, it speaks solemnly and earnestly, as if there were no other person in the world, to share the responsibility which accompanies it, and the peril of refusing it—bidding that one flee from the wrath of God to the shelter afforded by his love. The same individuality which the law recognises when it says, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," is contemplated by the gospel when it says, "Whosoever believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life; he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

No powers of rhetoric can wrest from its meaning such plain language; no sophistry can weave a web that will conceal the separate responsibility of every soul to the God of all power and grace. Yet the clinging and mingling associations of life seem to blind sinners to all sense of this greatest and most dreadful responsibility. Without dwelling on the perilous influences of ordinary friendship, which in reference to the matter before us, are by no means to be lightly regarded, let us look at the greater dangers of the closer ties of family and kindred.

In the view of his highest and eternal interests, how true is this prophetic declaration of our Lord, that "a man's foes shall be they of his own household." How often does it happen that one of many who have long lived together in habits of irreligion, feels a deep sense of the claims of the gospel and a strong impulse to lay hold on Christ as the true and only Saviour. The

way in which he has long walked, which once seemed to be level and without end, is now seen sloping downwards to the pit of destruction. Sin is felt to be a burden, and penitence seeks to pay its tribute to the dishonoured law of a holy God. The convicted sinner is almost persuaded to be a Christian, a devout and humble follower of Jesus.

But there is a clinging of the flesh to flesh, which checks the movement towards God and Christ. Affection spontaneously utters the decisive language which Ruth spake to Naomi: "Whither thou goest I will go, thy God shall be my God:" and the risen one sinks back into the arms of doomed associates, or painful anxiety to know the destiny of those who refuse to listen to the voice of the Saviour holds the awakened in a state of suspense and indecision, till the influences of grace have passed away, and Satan has claimed his own.

The latter case is the most common, perhaps. The convicted one says, inwardly, "What shall I do? If I take the step to which I am now moved by the word of God, my lot must be totally different from that of all who are dearest to me, unless they follow me, which I cannot expect." And the anxiety is prayerfully expressed in the words of St. Peter, but far more earnestly, perhaps: "Lord, what shall this one do?" What will be the final destiny of those from whom I am called to separate? Shall we all meet in another world to dwell together in peace forever? Or will Christ separate us then, as he has called us asunder now? The answer of Christ to such a one will always be, "What is that to thee? Follow thou me." You must stand before the judgment seat to give account of the use which you have made of your own privileges, and your own soul will be worth all the world besides. Secure your own salvation on the terms proposed to you. Follow your Lord now, and you will finally come to know all that it will be your happiness to know. Would that all knew the value of their own souls! They would then be not the less concerned indeed for the salvation of those who are dear to them, but they would be first and chiefly anxious on their own account. Concern for the souls of others is one of the strongest proofs of a full appreciation of the redemption which Christ has wrought. But that is properly manifested after our own share in that redemption is made reasonably sure. To secure that, is the first and highest duty, as well as the most im-

portant interest. Where the life of the body alone is concerned, it may be right to risk our own for the sake of those who are dear to us; but never can one be justified in perilling his own soul through anxiety for the spiritual welfare of another.

Pause not then, when Christ has called you to follow him, to inquire what will be the final destiny of your kindred and friends; but follow Christ at once, do what he requires of you, in the hope that your example may lead them right. Taste the blessings of the way of salvation, and then you may pray and strive for their conversion. It is perilous, and may be fatal, to hold back, with a half formed resolution to share the fate of those you love. For if you resist convictions which they never had, you may be widely separated in another world, though you keep together in this. There is no safety but in a prompt submission to the authority of that Lord who says to every one to whom he is revealed, "Follow thou me."

There are some in every community, who in respect to religious movements, are mere lookers on; who compare the conduct of the best of those who are not religious professors, with that of the worst of those who are, and ask, what is the moral benefit of a religious profession? Now it is a melancholy fact that there are some hypocrites, who, knowing the worth of a reputation for piety, have taken great pains to wear the garb of Christians. But this only shows what religion can do for those who are truly moved by its principles. For the appearance of base coin in any business community is a sure proof that there is good coin in free circulation. There could be no motive to counterfeit what did not pass current. Then it must be remembered that those hypocrites were bad men before they made the religious profession; that they made it to cover their wickedness, and hence religion is not answerable for it. And in estimating religion as seen in the world, much allowance must be made for delusion, since many of those who fail to show the fruits of religion, are deluded. There is much that passes for Christian doctrine and Christian character, which Christ will never recognise. And it is sad indeed, when there are so many opposing principles of human nature to obstruct the gospel, that its progress should be stayed by so many counterfeit presentments of it. Let the lookers on to whom we refer, turn from the false pictures which they select for their scrutiny, to the genuine image of

the gospel reflected in those who are sincerely and intelligently religious. Or let them view the gospel as it is set forth in the New Testament. For even if not one consistent believer could be found, the gospel would still claim the same reverent regard, the same absorbing interest from all to whom it is addressed.

To every one, therefore, who spurns the gospel, on account of the mock exhibition of it, or who hesitates to submit to its requirements, through any doubt of its holy influence; to every one who asks contemptuously, What has religion done for this man? or inquires doubtingly, Will that man be saved by his faith? pointing to some well-known example of inconsistency, to every such person the gospel replies in the words of our Saviour, "What is that to thee? Follow thou me."

Will you throw away your chance of salvation, because your neighbour trusts to a false hope? Will you lose your soul because another man is a hypocrite? To you the word of God has come, declaring your condemnation and offering you salvation through faith in Christ. You must forever abide the consequences of neglecting the offer. It will be no good plea at the bar of Christ that you saw much hypocrisy and delusion. See to it, that you follow Christ, lay hold on his promises, understand his requirements, and show in your life the genuine fruits of faith. Then will you have peace, though many of your fellow sinners may find endless sorrow.

Let us take one more view of the text:—when we urge the importance of conforming to the institutions of Christ in all things, of receiving his sacraments, and adhering to his one holy church, and this we are bound to urge as a part of the gospel, we are met with many objections, and among them with such as these, viz., "the utter impossibility of bringing all men to a perfect agreement in these matters, in consequence of the diversity of intellect and disposition, which prevails in the world, and the unreasonableness of requiring such agreement, since God has created men with so many varieties of mental constitution, and subjected them to so many different circumstances of condition." But the same objections would apply to the faithful preaching of the doctrine of salvation by faith in Christ. To each objector we would reply, it is for you to inquire and ascertain, whether these things are so; and, as an individual, to act accordingly: for

you will be judged according to your means of knowing and doing the will of God.

If man's aversion to receive what God has ordained, be a good apology for rejecting it, we need not be at the pains to insist on faith in a Redeemer's merits, for it is a doctrine at which the pride of man naturally revolts. Oh, no—we should rather allow every one the right and the liberty of choosing his own terms of salvation. But to pass from general objections to the particular point of application in which we would now regard the text, we remark that there are some to whom the ordinances of Christ are earnestly proposed, who, referring to the various communions of Christians within which their kindred and friends are included, ask (with much concern, or with implied censure of our dogmatism) if these are shut out from redemption through Christ, because they are separated from the unity of his church? Now we might justly reply to every one making such inquiry, in the language of our text:—"What is that to thee? follow thou me;" for if Christ has enjoined a union with his visible church upon every believer, then it is every believer's chief concern to know his own position; but this shrinking from an acknowledgment of the unity of the church, is caused by a mistaken view of what we hold in regard to those who are not in communion with us. The Protestant Episcopal Church, in the U. S. does not declare that none can be saved who are out of the pale of the church. We have never been so taught.

We believe that Christ's precious promises are sealed to the church, and we prove, by sure marks, that we belong to it. We also believe that our Lord commands and exhorts all to be joined to the one church, which is his body. And when we urge the will of Christ as a reason for church union, we only "speak the truth in love." The love of Christ animates the church in all her efforts to extend the knowledge of his great salvation, and the image of Christ, wherever seen, as dear to her. Godliness of character, a life devoted to Christ's service and the glory of God, she constantly inculcates. Her communion is open to all who love the Lord Jesus, and desire to honour him in his holy sacraments. She keeps those sacraments reverently, because they are Christ's—made by him and given by him. So we maintain the unity of the church, because it was the will of Christ her Lord to ordain it. And when we invite into the communion

of "the one, holy apostolic church" those who are now out of it, we desire to honour the Lord by the enlargement of his church, and the promotion of peace and harmony among Christians. And no one can reasonably charge us with bigotry for any proper effort to attain the much desired result. Nor can any one be justified in refusing to help to promote the unity of the church by his own incorporation with it, through anxiety about the spiritual condition of those who disregard it. If he has any fear lest they should suffer loss in consequence of living in a separate communion, this fear should not be permitted to interfere with his own obedience to the will of Christ. Whatever may be the degree of concern which is felt, for those from whom enlightened conscience calls you to separate, however you may in your heart inquire—"Lord, what shall these do?" you may take to yourself the answer of our text—"What is that to thee? Follow thou me."

See to it, that you follow the direction of your Lord in all things, obey his commandments, honour all his institutions. Go steadily in the path which he has marked out for you, though you be called to go alone.

The only question for you to determine is, "What has Christ ordained?" That being known, the consequence of despising or rejecting it must be a loss to you of Christ's favour, according to the importance of the ordinance in his view. No matter what may be the conduct of those who are now at agreement with you in rejecting the truth, it is for you to settle the matter for yourself, whether you will regard union with Christ through his ministry and sacraments as a duty, as well as a privilege, just as you must for yourself decide whether you will accept the offer of salvation through him. Let not the question of religious duty be perplexed by any considerations of expediency growing out of your present social or domestic relations. This is a too common hinderance to the salvation and the spiritual comfort of those to whom the gospel is preached.

Many, very many, are kept back from an avowal of Christian faith, or checked in their way towards the embracing of it by the restraints of family ties, of a connexion with unbelieving and irreligious relatives. And more are affected in this way than seem to be aware of it. There is often a shrinking of the mind from the contemplation of the doctrine of salvation through faith, lest if it be received, its reception

should be the virtual condemnation of those who have heretofore had a common lot with us in spiritual matters. Truth so exclusive makes no impression, because the mind turns away from it. When, however, it has made an impression, when the soul feels its own condemnation and the need of a Saviour, when the offered Saviour is believed to be the only one, the surrender will be made at any cost. But every one knows how easy it is, generally, to turn a deaf ear to what one does not wish to hear. And many do not wish to hear the doctrine which condemns, for unbelief, their dearest friends, who, they fear, will not embrace it. We warn you against yielding to such influences, constantly leading you away from the path of eternal peace.

To you severally the word of God is spoken: you are answerable only for your own treatment of it. You are called to repent of your own sins, and to believe in the promises of God through Christ Jesus. None can do this for you, neither can you do this for others.

A true and lively faith in Christ is required of every one to whom Christ is preached. An humble trust in his atoning merits, a surrender of the heart to him, manifested by submission to his ordinances, and obedience to his precepts, is the only sure ground of acceptance with God. Be careful to secure that refuge from eternal wo, that support under temptations and trials; that source of continual nourishment in the life which will have no end; the life of grace which will lead to glory. Let not the strong bonds of worldly interest, or the tender ties of kindred and affection, keep you from the path of peace and safety. The world that lures you can afford no resting-place from the torment of the judgment which you defy. Nor can the loved ones about whose final doom you anxiously inquire, relieve you from the guilt or the penalty of disobedience. Alone you must answer before God for the heed which you have given to his word, and for the use which you have made of all the privileges which might have redounded to your present comfort, and final well-being, and to the glory of your Lord.

Let this reflection lead you to secure first your own salvation. You may then properly strive, with much earnestness, to bring to Christ, through the church, all who are dear to you, that they may be joint heirs with you of that glorious inheritance, of which you now have the delightful foretaste.

SERMON XXIII.

“They took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.”—Acts iv. (part of 13th verse.)

THIS was the testimony given by the rulers of the Jews, in regard to Peter and John, the apostles of Jesus. They had imprisoned these apostles soon after the healing of the lame man, at the temple gate, because they taught the people to believe in Jesus, and the resurrection of the dead through him;—and having set them in the midst of their assembly, they asked, with a view to intimidate them, by what power or authority they had done the miracle? Instead of showing the expected deference and submission, the prisoners showed forth the power of the Holy Ghost which inspired them, by proclaiming in the face of the assembled rulers, the authority of Jesus, the divinely acknowledged and only Saviour, the source of their miraculous gifts. They charged these rulers with rejecting the stone which God had made the head of the corner, with crucifying him whose name alone could give salvation unto man. The fluency of their speech, full as it was of the scripture testimony to the Saviour, and the boldness with which they stood forth as the preachers of a religion which was so obnoxious to Jewish pride, amazed the assembly. They knew that these men were illiterate, of humble origin, and unschooled by the doctors and scribes, and they were therefore surprised at the deportment assumed on the occasion. Surely, some more than ordinary power was displayed in their case. They exhibited the same kind of conscious superiority, and trust in divine power, which Jesus manifested throughout his career of suffering and glory. Believing that the servants must have drawn their inspiration from the same source with their Master, these astonished

rulers declared their convictions in the words of our text: "They took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." Bear in mind, my hearers, that this was the testimony of the enemies of Jesus, his most cruel and bitter enemies. It was forced from them by the bold unflinching devotion of the avowed followers of Jesus. It was, therefore, the strongest testimony that could be given in their favour.

Let it be well considered as an example. It matters not that these men could work miracles. They could do so only for the glory of God in the furtherance of his glorious work of Christian redemption. They could not, by any supernatural power, save themselves from martyrdom. That last degree of devotion was necessary to show forth the same glory which miracles were wrought to promote. The truth is, they were sincere believers in the divine origin of the religion which they strove to uphold. They knew that Jesus of Nazareth, the mocked and persecuted Jesus, was the Christ, or Anointed, the Messiah of the Jews. And they felt bound to support his claims at all hazards. Such should be the zeal of the disciples of Jesus at all times.

And we would at this time make our text serve as a guide to some reflections on the duty of consistent conduct in a Christian professor, such conduct as will draw from worldly and irreligious people, the testimony expressed by the text, "They took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus."

Our remarks will tend to establish these propositions:—1st. That men of the world will take knowledge of professing Christians, whether they have been with Jesus. 2d. That the best testimony which can be given of the sincerity and devotedness of the members of the church, is the confession of those who, being opposed to the church, would be encouraged by examples of inconsistency.

1. Under the first of these heads it may be quite enough to say, that they who have taken Christian vows, have placed themselves in a position before the world, which exposes them to observation. They are, as our Saviour told his immediate followers, "a city set on a hill."

To stand out in the midst of a world full of wickedness, and devoted to all the glory and pleasure of earth, as the subjects and representatives of a spiritual Ruler, who has taught all who trust

in Him to set a higher value upon his favour, than upon all that the world can bestow; to do this, is to provoke the strictest scrutiny, and to promise full ability to endure it. And this every one does, who understandingly makes the Christian profession. Many make it, not knowing what they do, not estimating either the privileges or the responsibilities of the profession. Many presume to call themselves Christians, who have never been with Jesus, or who have only been with him in transports, like the three disciples on the mount of transfiguration, knowing nothing of the stern duties and severe trials which awaited them on their descent to the level of common life.

But they who, having felt the need of Christ as a Saviour, have embraced his promises, have been with him in his holy sacraments, and have been at his feet in the sanctuary, hearing and receiving his word, have truly avouched themselves his willing and obedient subjects. These say to the world, "We are in the world, but not of it. We have cast off its authority, abandoned its habits, and repudiated its maxims and principles. We profess to be governed by a law which is spiritual and searching in its nature. We follow a Master who has set up a spiritual kingdom, who bestows spiritual blessings, and demands of us a life conformable to his teaching. We profess to strive after holiness, not only because it is the evidence of a true faith in Christ, and of our title to the bliss eternal which will be its reward; but because we love him who first loved us, and gave himself for us." Such is the position which the professing Christian takes before the world. It is the setting up of a claim, not indeed always to a higher character for virtue than any who are irreligious, but to a higher standard of moral purity, a more stringent rule of virtuous living. He claims to be moved by a motive to watchfulness over the heart and the life, which, unknown to the unbeliever, leads him to seek a higher order of character than the latter can ever appreciate.

The Lord knows the thoughts of the heart, and requires that they should be pure. He demands not only good living, that is, outward correctness of deportment, but such a walk as will show a heart moved by true devotion to him. He requires a constant recognition of his presence with his people, of his Spirit to counsel, comfort and support; and of his promises of eternal glory as

the recompense of patient, trusting faith. Now with this profession of religion upon his lips, a Christian presents himself to the world as an object to be closely scrutinized. Several motives prompt such scrutiny.

In the first place, men expect the disciple to be like his Master. They look for the stamp of the Teacher and Ruler.

The power of association is known by all men. Like begets and attracts like. It is the teaching of common observation that a man's character may be known from the company which he keeps. He is either drawn into the society of kindred spirits, or he soon acquires the habits and principles of those with whom he has become associated by accident. Hence we perceive the importance of having proper associates.

On this principle is founded the counsels of Holy Scripture and of holy men to the professor of religion, or member of the church, to come out from the midst of the unbelieving and wicked: "Evil communications corrupt good manners." One cannot touch an unclean thing without being defiled.

Accidental association, then, leading to a gradual likeness to the class with which the individual associates, and closeness of intercourse causing close assimilation, we see how reasonable is the conclusion of worldly men, that a true professor of Christian faith will show in his character the features of his Lord. And the more he shows the likeness of Jesus, the more credit will he have for true faith.

Having a right to look for this manifestation of sincerity and earnestness, the world will search for it and demand it. They who hear Christians exhorting them to a religious profession, will naturally desire and ask for some good evidence of its salutary, reforming influence. They may say to the church member, "You wish to persuade us to embrace the privileges and take the vows of the church. Why? For the sake of the joys and comforts of religious hope? or for the sake of the beneficial influence of faith upon moral character?" If the comfort of hope is all we shall gain, we will wait till the close of life for that, so far as it relates to the soul's salvation from eternal wo. If, however, the joy in believing is held up as a continual gratification, of a higher order than any that belongs to this world, why do you not show your estimation of its exceeding worth by preferring it to all others?

Here is the argument brought home to the professor, who seems to take as much pleasure in worldly things as worldly men do. The same kind of argument may be brought to bear upon the professor, who is not remarkable for his moral purity.

The irreligious may say, "Do you ask us to become members of the church that we may be better men, more upright in our deportment, more correct in our dealings with our fellow men? And with what do you expect to tempt us? Not with the show of fruitfulness in your case, surely." Now this is fair retort upon the individual who recommends by word, what he cannot do by holy living, though single instances of inconsistency do not justify the unbeliever in rejecting the Christian system. And it shows how important consistency is in every professor. For every such person does silently, at least, hold up the Christian system as worthy to be received by his fellow men. And if he is not consistent, he puts the Christian profession to mockery and shame.

This is one prompting to a close scrutiny of the professing Christian in the mind of the man of the world, viz.: a reasonable expectation that the disciple will show a likeness to the Master, that the system will exhibit its good influences. There is another more powerful one. It is a quick sensitiveness to the implied rebuke and condemnation of his own character and conduct by the professor of faith in Christ. This rouses the wicked unbeliever to a furious hatred of the religion which is advocated by an unworthy professor. The moral man who is an unbeliever, or who is not a professor, looks on with mingled pity and contempt, while an inconsistent professor vaunts his religion. In both cases there is injury to the cause of Christ, done by an avowed friend, a Brutus-like betrayal.

Since, therefore, there are two strong motives to a careful observation of the professing Christian, constantly operating upon the mind of a worldly man, he should be very watchful over himself, lest he give them occasion to blaspheme the name of Christ. We should strive to make his religion lovely in the sight of the world, and to win to its embrace those who stand aloof. We should so live as to compel the unbelieving to bear witness that the member of Christ's church is indeed a follower of Christ.

Secondly, This testimony of the irreligious world to the practical working for good of the Christian profession, is the strongest

that can be given. For there can be no suspicion of its truth. It is wrung from the enemy, from those who have keen eyes to detect errors of living, and hearts disposed to make the most of them. All the bias of prejudice is against the Christian. The most sensitive nerves of feeling are touched by the pretension to superior purity of character. The sight is sharpened by resentment or envy in the heart of the observer, and if he fail to detect faults, it may well be concluded that none can be charged against the object of scrutiny. The interest of the witness being against the person on trial, his testimony, if favourable, has the more weight. And how often is that interest shown! Who has not seen proofs of obliquity of vision in the estimation of Christian character by men who hate religion? If the professor seems to be correct and honest in all outward dealings, he is often called a hypocrite, and suspected of being inconsistent in those things of which the world at large can take no cognizance. How pure and upright must he be, who can draw, from men disposed to criticise thus, a confession that he is consistent and without reproach! And who would not be glad to secure such testimony for the furtherance of the cause of Christ?

Now, Christian brethren, you profess, if you know your calling, to live for the good of the world and glory of God in Christ Jesus. Whatever increase you can gain to his cause by your holy living, you are bound to afford. However small may be your resources of mind or outward possessions, you can surely give to your Lord a life of godliness, in proof of devotion. And godliness consists not merely in moral purity, although that, flowing from a love to God is a part of it, but in a manifestation of such love for him, as will lead you to prefer religious meditation and religious employments to all others. The true feeling which a hearty faith will inspire, is that warm affection for Christ your Saviour, which is jealous of all other affection, which prompts to such a mode of living as will leave no room for suspicion of your fidelity, which guards against the least reproach to the name and cause of your Master. It will cause you to avoid all such association with worldly people as will bring your profession into contempt—all compromise of your principles to gain the favour of the irreligious. And there is great danger of being drawn into a compliance with the humours and prejudices of the ungodly

rich, powerful and fashionable. It is not an uncommon thing for the professor of religion to be turned aside from the right path, by the taunts and sneers of those who affect to be above the influence of priestcraft, as submission to the teaching of Christ in the church is often called.

Many are laughed out of a consistent walk, who could not be driven from it by the strong tyranny of bitter persecution. The dangerous dissipation and the frivolous amusements of fashionable society, from which the watchful and sober Christian should abstain, are made baits for the weak and unwary to lure them into a betrayal of the cause of religion. Now an intelligent Christian knows very well that there are many things lawful that are not expedient, many acts which may be done without criminality, but still not without reproach. He may indulge in some of the amusements that are usually regarded as offensive to pious people, without any actual harm to himself or to his neighbour. But if by so doing, he places himself on a footing with those who revile religion, if he mingles in scenes of riot and revelling, which they think unbecoming in a Christian, he lowers himself in their estimation and the church of which he claims to be a representative. We bring to the conscience of the Christian, the earnest exhortation of an apostle, (which is indeed the corner stone of gospel teaching,) "Be not conformed to this world." Do not, while you profess to live as subjects of a kingdom, whose foundation is divine, whose laws are spiritual, and whose hopes are heavenly, show yourselves devotees to earthly pleasure, fawning flatterers of the worldly great, or willing subjects of the fickle ruler fashion. If you have a desire for the dissipation of fashionable society, (and if you are a true Christian, it is hard to conceive how you can have,) you should consider both the reproach which the indulgence of it would bring upon the church, and the injurious effects thereof upon your own religious character. Say what you will in excuse of those who visit the ball-room and the theatre, and other like places of ungodly character, it must be admitted by all who have well observed, that such conformers to this world are of very little account to the church. They are wanting in the chief points of a good church member.

There will be borderers in religion, people who occupy the frontier of the church and the world, who seek the advantages of

an alliance with both. But like the mixed race on the boundary line of civilized and savage life, unclaimed by one side and suspected by the other, they do harm to both. For the Christian who lives as the worldly do, is injurious to them, as well as to the church. He keeps them from the church, while he helps to bring the church into contempt. We say then to the members of the church, if you are what you should be, you will not desire to conform to the world in those practices which are deemed unbefitting a Christian. And if you crave such enjoyments as belong to the irreligious, you should, in deference to the church, and for her honour, as well as your own welfare, resolutely deny yourselves. It is surely no wonder that infidels think religion a mockery, when professed believers make it so. Indifference and inconsistency in the advocate and representative, do more to injure the cause than the bitter rancour of the enemy. Let the members of the church be true to their calling, and we need not fear for her gradual enlargement. Let them, as they love the Lord who gave himself for them, strive to honour him before men by an open profession of faith in him, and a zealous devotion to his service. Never let the fear of the world drive you from the fear of God, or the love of the world supplant that affection for your Saviour which should warm your heart. But let your thoughts, words and actions, your principles, habits and pleasures, show that here you have no continuing city, but look for an eternal dwelling in heaven, through the mercy of a divine Redeemer.

SERMON XXIV.

“By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac.”—HEBREWS xi. 17.

THE account of this trial of Abraham, recorded in the twenty-second chapter of Genesis, is a very interesting portion of Scripture; for it opens to us the whole subject of Christian redemption, in its early prefiguration, and its final perfect accomplishment; and leads to the consideration of sacrifice in general, as well as of that sublime and stupendous sacrifice, of which the commanded offering up of Isaac was a divinely appointed type.

That this was such a type there is abundant evidence. Indeed, there are so many circumstances in which the scene of Isaac's mystical sacrifice resembled the sacrifice of Christ, that without any inspired testimony on the subject, we might confidently declare, that the resemblance was designed. But we have such testimony, which, with the circumstances referred to, will be particularly noticed.

The text says, that Abraham, by faith “offered up Isaac.” The will is here taken for the deed. God having accepted the willing heart, prevented the act intended, and substituted another victim. Abraham made all the necessary preparations for the sacrifice, and his readiness to obey the will of God is noted by the apostle, as a memorable instance of faith. We think that Abraham's faith had its immediate reward. We believe, that during the scene of this typical offering, the Father of the faithful (whose faith was counted for righteousness,) had a revelation of God's purpose, to send salvation to man through a Redeemer, who should be offered up for the sins of the world.

That Christ's death was a sacrifice in the true sense, we need not quote Scripture to prove. The expressions in the New Tes-

tament, in which the words "sacrifice and sin-offering" occur, in connexion with the name of Jesus Christ, are not (as the Socinians falsely maintain,) mere figurative allusions to Jewish sacrifices. They are positive assurances of the real and immediate efficacy of Christ's death, corresponding to that of the ancient sin-offerings. In the epistle to the Hebrews, this correspondence is particularly stated. All the sacrifices of the law show, that "without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins," because God had ordained the blood of Christ to be the only propitiation for sin.

Now if the Jewish sacrifices were all thus typical of Christ, it is natural to inquire, whether the same may not be said of all sacrifice: and we may make this inquiry, with something like a presumption that we shall find the rite itself to have been originally ordained of God as a type of Christ's propitiatory offering for man's redemption. That the rite of sacrifice was instituted by God himself, seems to follow, as a matter of course, from the peculiar favour with which he received the offering of Abel, while he rejected that of Cain. In Genesis iv. 3, 4, we read that "In process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering: but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect." Now what made the difference in the case of these two brothers? Can we account for the distinction made by the Almighty, on any principle of reason? If the offerings were the suggestions of reason, and each brought a portion of that which specially concerned him—the shepherd of his flock, and the husbandman of the fruits of the ground which he tilled—did they not stand on equal terms, in regard to the Being whom they acknowledged? Why then was Abel's offering so much more acceptable? They who deny the divine institution of sacrifice, are unable to give any satisfactory account of this distinction between the brothers.

If, however, the rite be regarded as of divine institution, then it is easy to see why Abel's offering of animals was preferred to Cain's gift of fruits. Abel complied with the institution, whatever may have been its object, and therein obeyed God. While Cain set up his own will against the authority of God, and chose

to offer what was most convenient to himself. This must be the true origin of animal sacrifice; and God probably instituted it very early, in reference to his great purposes in regard to man. We read that Adam and his wife were clothed with coats of skins by the direction of the Lord, soon after their fall. And it is reasonable to suppose, that the bodies of the animals whose skins they wore, were offered in sacrifice. They were not eaten, for man had no permission to eat animal food, till long after this time. It is highly probable, that it was then that sacrifice was first ordained, as an acknowledgment of sin, and the necessity of propitiation.

Now if such was the date and object of this divine institution, Cain and Abel were both acquainted with it, when they came "in process of time," (or "at the end of days," as it is rendered in the margin) that is, at the appointed time, to make their offerings. Abel showed faith and obedience, while Cain showed neither. Now if this divine rite was instituted with direct reference to the death of Christ, as the atonement for all sin, (as is most probable,) then Abel, by his animal sacrifice, declared his faith in the great sacrifice to come—the promised Messiah—and was therefore accepted: while Cain, the first Deist, denied the Saviour, and was rejected for his infidelity.

In the fourth verse of the chapter from which our text is taken, we find an apostle's account of this transaction. He says, (Heb. xi. 4,) "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts." Abel, then, was directed by faith; and this faith was shown in the nature of the offering which he made. He must, therefore, have had some revelation of God's will in regard to this matter. Let us, then, view the earliest period of sacred history, and see if we can find any promise relating to man's spiritual condition, to which the rite of sacrifice might refer.

We can readily find such a one, close by the first tidings of the fall of man. God made known the future redemption of man at the very moment that the fall took place. "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed. It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel," is the first prophecy of fallen man's redemption. Now it was important to the religious character of the descendants of Adam, to keep

the memory of this promise alive by some outward memorial. Indeed, in no other way could religion be kept alive. Man must have something to remind him at once of the fall, and of the promised deliverance; and it is natural to suppose, that the memorial would have some reference to the peculiar mode of redemption. Now we know from Scripture, that God ordained, in the beginning, both the redemption of man and the mode of effecting it. Christ is declared to be "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, to be the propitiation for all sin." And what could be more appropriate, as a memorial of this, than the slaughter of an animal, to be offered on the altar?

Whether the mode of deliverance, (which was ordained by God, and typified by the sacrifice,) were actually discerned by man at this early period, is a matter, which, though it might be regarded as highly probable, cannot be fully determined. Still it may be confidently believed, that the rite of sacrifice was ordained as a sign of faith in the promise of redemption, the mode of redemption being not yet made known. On this principle, we can easily explain the peculiar acceptableness of Abel's offering. He trusted in God, and in obedience to his institution, offered that sacrifice which was a fit expression of faith. Cain, on the other hand, disregarding this institution, or presuming to exercise his own reason and will in the matter, offered only an acknowledgment of God's sovereignty, and an expression of gratitude for his benefits. In short, Abel may be regarded as a prototype of the true Christian, who trusts in the Saviour, once offered for the sins of the world. Whilst Cain has for his representatives, all those (Deists) who deny Christ, and those professing to believe in him, who reject, in proud reliance upon their own reason, his divinely appointed sacrifice.

This very natural view of the subject is confirmed by the expostulation which God makes with Cain, when he expressed his resentment, at the rejection of his offering. The words of the Lord are, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door." Now this passage, as it reads in this translation, cannot easily be explained. But if we substitute for the word "sin," the word "sin-offering," which is the meaning given to the original in other places, we shall see the connexion between this passage and what goes before. We

then see that it contains God's rebuke of Cain, for not using the sin-offering that he had appointed, and Abel had offered; so that it amounts to a direct enforcement of animal sacrifice.

We think, therefore, that these conclusions are well established; namely, the sacrifice of Abel was an animal sacrifice. It was accepted. The ground of acceptance was the faith in which it was offered. The object of this faith was the promise of a Redeemer, and the proper expression of it seems to have been the offering of a victim. And as the idea of a Redeemer is inseparable from that of the fall of man, the sacrifice also included a reference to this fall. * Hence we conclude, that sacrifice was originally ordained by God, as a standing memorial of the death which came into the world by sin, and of the death which the Redeemer must suffer, to deliver mankind from it.

In course of time, when men had forgotten the object and design of the rite—when the rite alone remained, and all memory of the promises connected with it was lost—when it had degenerated into a rite of cruel idolatry, God chose a people to whom he directly revealed the knowledge of himself, as the only God, and on whom he enjoined sacrifice with an express mention of atonement, to which it had reference. This choice fell first on Abraham, whom God called from his father's house, unto a land which he would show him, promising, as the reward of obedience, to make of him a great nation. God afterwards promised that "All the nations of the earth should be blessed through his posterity." This promise shows the true design of God's choice of Abraham and the separation of his family. And this should be borne in mind throughout our examination of the history of Abraham.

But what availed this promise to one who was childless? Abraham "complained unto the Lord that he had no child." God heard his sorrowful complaint, and promised him a son of his own body, who should be his heir, and from whom should spring a numerous posterity. "And Abraham believed the Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness." Not long after this, a son was born unto him of his handmaid Hagar—Sarah, his wife, being yet barren. He doted on this child, Ishmael, who he thought would be his heir. But when Ishmael was thirteen years old, and Abraham was ninety-nine, and Sarah ninety, God set aside Ishmael, the son of the bondwoman, promising a son by Sarah, one

whose name should be called Isaac, with whom and his seed after him, an everlasting covenant should be established. Isaac was born at the set time, and in a few years Ishmael was cast out by Sarah's direction, God confirming it, saying, "Hearken unto Sarah, for in Isaac shall thy seed be called."

It may well be supposed, that Abraham, seeing how fixed God's determination was to bless Isaac and his posterity, must have been by this time very eager to know the nature of the blessing that was to come; he must have pondered much upon the subject, and must have made known his desires unto God. These desires, we think, were gratified. For it came to pass, several years after Ishmael (the son of the bond woman) had been cast out, that God tempted Abraham in this manner. He said unto him, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." We may see, on referring to the passage, that Abraham so far obeyed the Lord as to prepare to offer his son as a burnt-offering, when God interposed, being satisfied with the willing heart, and provided another victim.

Now in this action, which was the exhibition of a sacrifice, there was a distinct revelation to Abraham of the future redemption of the world by the offering of the Messiah, that should spring from him. So we declared at the outset; and we offered to show some inspired testimony in proof of it. We now adduce such testimony from the eighth chapter of St. John. It is that of Christ himself. He there says to the Jews, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad." Such is the way our translators have expressed the sense of the original. But it will admit of a much better and more literal translation. The words "rejoiced to see," should be "longed that he might see, or longed to see." If then, we substitute the expression "longed to see," for "rejoiced to see," we shall truly convey the meaning of our Saviour, who said, "Your father Abraham longed to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad." The word "day" is here used figuratively. It does not mean merely the time, (of his appearing,) but the object of his appearing, his office, and employment. For it was of this that our Lord had been speaking, his power as Redeemer. "Verily I say unto you, if a man keep

my sayings he shall never see death," was the assertion which led to that which we are considering. The Jews caught at this and replied, "Art thou greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Whom makest thou thyself?" They seized the literal meaning of his words, and kept the idea of natural death all the while. Jesus, on the contrary, adhered to the spiritual meaning of death, from which he would deliver mankind. And then, taking up the idea of the prophecies and types which foreshowed this redemption, (suggested by their mention of their father Abraham,) he immediately declares that Abraham had seen his day, and was glad to see it. "His day," therefore, means his mediation between God and man. And this use of the word "day" is very common in the holy Scripture; Christ uses the same expression in speaking of his final judgment of the world, Luke xvii. 24: he says, "For as the lightning that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day." So, the restoration of the Jews is called by the prophet Hosea, "their day." "Great shall be the day of Israel."

When we take into consideration this testimony of Jesus, together with the circumstances of this mystical sacrifice, so completely paralleled in the true counterpart—the sacrifice of Christ,—we cannot hesitate to affirm, that Abraham had a manifestation of that redemption, (through the Messiah that would spring from him,) which would be the blessing promised to all the nations of the earth. Look now at these circumstances, and see how plainly they refer to those of the great sacrifice of the Redeemer.

Isaac was the only son of Abraham, born unto him when Sarah had passed the usual age of child-bearing. Hence he bore a likeness, in the circumstances of his condition, to the only Son of God, "whose birth was miraculous." Abraham was commanded to take this only and dearly beloved son, and go to a certain mount, and offer him in sacrifice. The transaction occupied three days, including the journey thither. When they came in sight of the place, Abraham laid the wood of the altar on his son's shoulders, and they went together to the place. Having laid the wood in order, Abraham bound Isaac, and laid him upon the wood, and then took the knife to slay him. This was enough; God here interposed; and Abraham, seeing a ram caught by his horns in a thicket, took him and offered him instead of his son.

Now the mount on which Isaac was offered—this only son—was Moriah, the same on which the Lord was crucified. Jesus bore the cross, which was the wood of the altar on which he was offered, as Isaac bore the wood of his altar. Isaac was bound to the wood on the altar—Jesus was nailed to the cross. The scene described by Moses occupied three days. The whole duration of the act of redemption, from the nailing to the cross until the resurrection, was three days also. Thus we find the type answering in all these particulars to the antitype.

We have, therefore, abundant proof, drawn from the circumstances of the mystical offering of Isaac, as well as from the testimony of our Saviour himself, that it had a designed reference to the great propitiatory offering of Christ. And referring to the writings of the Old Testament, we perceive that God has given to man revelations of his wise and benevolent purposes, gradually more and more distinct, from the dawn of history until the coming of Christ; that the truly faithful of old time might be comforted with hope, and that the religion of Christ, when preached, might be supported by the strong evidence of prophecy.

We find traces of the appointed redemption of man coeval with the event which called for it, and we can follow the light of the revealed truth from the first faint gleam which broke upon the vision of the doomed inhabitants of Eden, down to the full blaze which marked the coming of Christ.

First, we have the prophetic intimation of the conflict between Satan and the woman, and between their respective seeds; which would result in the final and complete triumph of “the seed of the woman.” And we have reason to suppose, that the mode of triumph was soon after typified by the rite of sacrifice, as a memorial to be observed by all men.

Of the first two children of the fallen parents of mankind, one slighted this appointed memorial, and killed the other, who observed it. A third son, Seth, then appeared, from whose family the future Redeemer was destined to arise. Seth was the ancestor of Noah, whom God saved from the deluge which swept away the wicked. From him came Shem, who was the ancestor of Abraham, to whom, we have seen, the promise of a future Redeemer was clearly given. This Redeemer was foretold as the descendant of Isaac. From Isaac came Jacob and Esau, of whom

it was declared before their birth, that Jacob, the younger, should have the right of primogeniture, and become the father of the promised Messiah. Of the twelve children of Jacob, Judah was marked out by prophecy, as the favoured one. David belonged to the family or tribe of Judah, and to his seed were the promises limited. Afterward, prophecies were numerous and clear, until the forerunner came, pointing to the Son of the virgin, the Lamb of God, Jesus the true Messiah.

Through all the successive stages of prophecy, we find evidences of the power of faith in its ultimate fulfilment. These are recorded for examples to us. Some of them are mentioned in the chapter from which our text is taken. "By faith Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac," his son, at the command of God. These were instances of faith in the promise of redemption. Let us, to whom the accomplished redemption has been revealed and offered, be filled with zeal, to emulate the faith of those to whom it was only foreshadowed.

Let us, while we read of these worthies, not only admire their confidence in God, but also revere the wisdom of him who gave them evidences upon which they could rely. And while we compare with those revelations, the fulness of testimony which we have received, let us show our sense of God's goodness by a willing reception of the truth, and a hearty dedication of ourselves to our divine Redeemer. And especially let us, while commemorating the redemption through Christ, be so strong in faith, and so warmed with the spirit of godliness, that we may "duly partake of the spiritual food of his most precious body and blood," that we may be nourished in grace, and be enabled to offer up ourselves a living sacrifice, acceptable unto God.

SERMON XXV.

“I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”—HEBREWS xiii. 5.

MAN is born to an inheritance of wo. Even the domestic affections, which are the sources of his purest earthly joys, often exact a bitter tribute in the wretchedness of blasted hope, and the desolation of bereavement.

The tendrils, which twine themselves around the heart, are pointed with sharp thorns, which the pressure of outward circumstances often forces us to feel, and which dreadfully tear the flesh when those tendrils are rudely severed.

It might seem only needful that man should know the nature of his heritage on earth, in order to be moved to seek diligently such consolations as the gospel kindly offers.

And surely the clear promise, that he shall find what he seeks, should be regarded as a sufficient encouragement. Such promises are abundantly scattered over the pages of Holy Scripture. Nor does the gospel afford assurance only; it wins by its entreaties also. So tenderly does Christ feel for the wants of frail humanity, that his voice has the tone of a suppliant for the mercy which he kindly offers to bestow. He calls in piteous accents “To the weary and heavy laden,” saying, “Come unto me, and I will give you rest.” So, too, He promises to abide continually with those who will receive him as a comforter. They have the divine assurance of the perpetual presence of him to whom they have fled for succour. In divers places, and in many forms of expression, the gospel of peace declares, as in the language of the text, to all who put their trust in Christ their Saviour, in his name and by his authority, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” The promise contained in these words, was originally

given by God to Joshua, and it was quoted by the apostle as applicable to the Hebrew converts, whom he encouraged to steadfastness in the Christian faith. He bids them be content with such things as they had, to submit patiently to the dispensations of God's providence, and to be satisfied with whatever it might please God to bestow, on the ground of his constant presence, to guide and sustain them.

Let us take these words in their general application to the consolations of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Considered as addressed to the believer in Christ, they declare the extensive, permanent, and complete blessedness of the religion which he established on earth. For as "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever," eternal and immutable, so is he ever nigh unto all who trust in him for salvation—ready to sustain them, in life, under all its vicissitudes—in death, under all its shapes and circumstances—and in the day of judgment, amidst all its awful solemnities.

By the mysterious doctrine of his incarnation, we have an assurance of His divinity, by which he is able to save to the uttermost all who put their trust in him, and of his perfect humanity, by virtue of which, "being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." We have a High Priest who can be touched with feeling for our infirmities,—who can not only make intercession for us, with a full and tender sympathy for all our wants, but who can, and will also, visit us constantly with the counsels of his Holy Spirit, to strengthen us in every trial.

We have said that Christ's consolations will be afforded in life, in death, and in the day of judgment. The remarks, which we have yet to offer, will have reference to these several points.

First: Christ says to all who believe and trust in him, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" in the trials of life. This is a great encouragement. It is an offer of that "armour of God," which will enable the believer to resist the attacks of the tempter, and withstand the evil one in the hour of extreme danger. When the believer is sorely beset with trials, and is strongly drawn towards sin,—when his resolution is fast yielding to temptation,—then may he call upon that Saviour who is able to keep him from falling, and obtain strength sufficient for his wants.

The recollection of the promises which have been given to the

believer, will always be the means of strengthening faith, and of encouraging efforts to subdue the enemies of salvation. "Without me," says our Lord to his disciples, "Ye can do nothing." And St. Paul says, "I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me." There is a perfect consistency, therefore, in the doctrines of the New Testament; for as we are not sufficient of ourselves to withstand the temptations which beset us, we surely must have the continual help of the Saviour. And as we are assured of the former, so we are assured of the latter. There is not, consequently, a single temptation to sin, which may not remind us of our ever present help, the divine and omnipotent Saviour. And trusting in his might, we may confidently expect to resist temptation, and should therefore make continual and earnest efforts to overcome it.

The influence of the Holy Spirit is promised to all who ask it in humble faith; and that influence will be sufficient to enable the believer to maintain the cause of righteousness and truth, and to illustrate in his own person, the excellency and beauty of the Christian scheme of salvation. This spiritual influence has in it nothing miraculous. It works upon the mind and heart entirely through faith in the word and promises of God. Christ is present, as a help in time of temptation, through his Spirit. If the believer, feeling his need of divine support, is inclined to seek it, he will be earnest in prayer to God, and watchful over his heart, that he may check any tendency to sin, and improve every motion to godliness. In the act of prayer, he will remember the sacrifice which Christ offered for his redemption, and the obligation of gratitude and constant devotion which it imposed upon him. He will be reminded of his vow of unreserved submission to God's holy will, and of the duty of living according to the recognised doctrine, that "Christ gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

These recollections, made more impressive by the feelings of sinful weakness that prompted the call for divine aid, bring Christ near to the believer. Now these recollections, as well as every other motion of the heart towards Christ and godliness, are rightly regarded as proceeding from the quickening agency of the Holy Spirit; and this Comforter will abide forever with

those who are true to their profession of faith in Jesus. It will be their own fault if they, to whom the promise is given, ever lose the presence and help of the Spirit sent by Christ. "He will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Be not dismayed, then, Christian, if Satan presses you sorely with temptations; but look with humble confidence to the divine and omnipresent Saviour, who bids you cast yourself upon his protection, saying, "Fear not; I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

As you have a constant protector in the hour of danger from temptation, so, Christian friends, you have a constant comforter in the time of sorrow and affliction. Oh! it is in the dark hour of adversity, that the Christian, especially, needs the support of faith, and may lean upon it with perfect trust. He who rides upon the storm has set his bow in the cloud; and although there may be a cloud without a rainbow, there cannot be a rainbow without a cloud. It is the light of God's countenance, resting on the dark vapour, which causes the token to appear. So it is in the midst of the lowerings of adversity, when the heart is melted with sorrow, or shrouded in gloom, that the Christian may expect the special consolations of divine grace. Then, when all earthly help fails to cheer and sustain the soul, Christ will come to comfort them that mourn, "to give unto them the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." Then the Christian feels the preciousness of that Saviour, who clothed himself for awhile with the habiliments of humanity, that he might be near to the heart of frail, sorrowing man, that the afflicted might cast their burden upon a Saviour, who could feel as a man for the woes that he came to relieve. Many have found him whom they sought in the time of their greatest need, and can testify how great a comforter he is who has borne our sorrows and carried our griefs. He comes to the afflicted with words of truth, assuring them that all sorrow is designed as a wholesome medicine for the soul,—as a trial and a purifier; that it is a mark of God's favour and love,—(for "whom he loveth he chasteneth,") and that "the sorrow which endureth for a moment, is not to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed" in the faithful who endure unto the end. Affliction is thus disarmed of its worst sting, and shown to be not a calamity, but a divinely ordered blessing—a means of preparing the soul more fully for the eternal

state to which it is hastening. And what are a few days, or even years, of suffering here on earth, compared with the hope, so well-grounded in Scripture promises, of an eternity of bliss. No matter in what shape affliction may come,—good may be brought out of evil to the true believer. Christ will sanctify the trial to the well-being of his soul. Whether it be the loss of wealth, health, or friends, the consolations of the gospel will make it tolerable. If wealth has been suddenly wrested from your grasp, and the friends, who were attracted by its glitter, have followed its flight, the heavenly Counsellor is nigh to you, saying, “Set your affections on things above, and lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.” Riches have been a snare to you; hence they have been taken away, that you might live in more earnest preparation for your eternal inheritance. Thus, even when God smites with one hand, he heals with the other.

If sickness befall you, and you are tossed on the bed of suffering for many weary days, be assured you are in the hands of the great Physician, who will cause the infirmities of the body to promote the health of the soul. Soon you will put off this tabernacle of the flesh, and then you will put away the sorrows which belong to it for joys that will be greater or less, according as you have borne well or ill the trials to which you were called.

But it is in bereavement, especially, that Christ is the only sure and sufficient comforter. Then it is that men feel most their utter helplessness. Many, when death has come near them, will call upon the Lord for help, though at other times they are scarce mindful of him. Some have found, perhaps, a Saviour from sin when they sought only a comforter in affliction. Great are the uses of poverty, and precious are the consolations which faith in Jesus can impart. Where else can peace be found? Can human skill minister to the wounds caused by sundered ties of kindred or affection?

When sudden bereavement has frozen the warm current that once mantled the cheek, will the counsel of worldly wisdom warm it into its wonted flow? A smile may flit across the features, whereon despair has fixed her seat; but 'tis the moonbeam glancing o'er a statue—the pale glow of light, without the warmth that betokens life. Philosophy, cold and cheerless, may come, with Lethe's cup, and say, “Drink of the waters of sweet oblivion.

Dwell not in the region of sorrow. Earth has many paths that tempt to dalliance. Time has new scenes, and ever-varying objects to divert the mind. Flee from the house of mourning, and mingle with the gay and careless world. With them forget your grief." Oh, mockery of peace! Such counsel as ill befits the house of mourning, as the viol's merry sound, the vaulted chambers of the tomb! Let the voice of heavenly truth be heard in sorrow's darkest hour. Unfold the drapery of the mourner's couch, that light from on high may send its cheering beams to the soul of the desolate. Let the image of the wonderful Counsellor be seen—the God-man, who thrust into his own bosom the stings of sorrow, to blunt their point. Bid the mourner look upon Jesus, the Saviour, as he stood by the side of the bereaved sisters at the grave of Lazarus. Hear him speaking, amid tears and sobs of human sympathy, in the wondrous tones of godlike power, "Thy brother shall rise again: I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

Like tones of tender soothing may be heard issuing from the throne in heaven. He who now dwells in the glory of his mediatorial kingdom, visits the humble and the contrite, the friendless and the desolate, the stricken and the fainting. He pours balm into the wounds of the soul, saying to the sorrowing, "It is good to be afflicted." Despise not the chastening of the Lord, neither faint when thou art rebuked of him. It is the Lord's doings; believe and fear not; I am with thee; "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

Ah! this is the unction for a wounded spirit. Let the Saviour anoint the sufferer, and grief's healing fountain will be opened, the rigid heart be softened, and moulded into peaceful acquiescence. God's wisdom and goodness are thus displayed in trying man in the furnace of affliction. The metal, which would otherwise perhaps be always brittle, is rendered ductile, so that it may be formed into the desired shape. If, then, hearers, God has been pleased to kindle the fire of grief in your heart, murmur not, but consider wherefore he has afflicted you. Say not, in a complaining mood, "Why am I singled out to be the chief of mourners, when others, sinful like myself, are not chastised?" Give not utterance to such thoughts; but place your hand upon your lips, and bow your head before the Lord, in token of submission, seek-

ing in your own heart the pious uses of your sorrow. If that heart has not been given to the Lord, if you have not vowed obedience to his will, and recognised his claim to your highest love, strive so to take God's visitation, that you may be able to say, in sincerity, "Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now, O Lord, I have kept thy law."

And if you are a professed disciple of Christ, knit to him in that holy communion which is the church's high privilege and joy, you may not doubt God's wise and loving purpose in afflicting you. Has he come very near to you by his messenger, and taken from you one who has long been regarded as a part of your very being, to whom you clung with affection, strengthened and purified by a common faith? What says the voice of heavenly truth to you? Hear its fond pleading. Didst thou love the lost one more for the lineaments of the Saviour's image stamped upon his soul? Then was the tie not merely one of flesh, but of spirit, which still exists—a golden chain, which binds soul to soul, and both to heaven. You hear no more the voice of love; but you may feel the communion of the Spirit. The prayers which the departed offered daily for your spiritual welfare, break not forth from the full fountains of a yearning heart, but the echoes are yet lingering in the courts of heaven. Give, then, to earth her tribute—the dust to dust, from which it sprang, and live with the soul which God has taken to a better world, in the unity of the Spirit, the communion of saintship in the Lord.

Life is a season of trial; and though all are not alike treated, none should doubt God's goodness and justice; for he sees our need of chastisement, though we may not see it. And even should there be no positive need of it in one case more than in another, yet in the eternal world, for which we here live, we shall reap in joy, according as we have sown in sorrow, if we have sown meekly and patiently. Be assured that God will vindicate his ways to man; and though you may be led blindfolded on earth, you will be fully satisfied when you "awake in his likeness" from the slumber of the grave. Cling, then, to the Saviour. There is no trial, however severe, which faith cannot enable you to bear—no affliction which Christ cannot soothe. Though the clouds of adversity lower, and the tempest blacken above and around the Christian; though the billows of trouble roll fearfully; yet Christ

may be seen walking amidst the billows, (as upon the sea of Genesaret,) saying, "Be not afraid; it is I. I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

As Christ is ever nigh to the believer in the cares and sorrows of life, fulfilling his promises, and inviting to firm faith and unwavering confidence in him, so is he ever present, at the hour of death, to chase away the gloom which hangs around the grave, and to give peace to the departing soul. The sting of death is sin. If that be taken away, by a crucified Saviour, there is no fear of condemnation to make the close of life distressing, as the end of the season of preparation for a final judgment. The apprehension of that judgment is the chief terror of death; and if the soul is at peace with God, through faith in Jesus, there is nothing painful in looking forward to final judgment. Faith subdues fear, and excites hope and joy. The true believer has not only an assurance of pardon for sin, but the promise of eternal bliss; and if the loosing of the bands of life should cause a hard struggle, and the Christian, bound to earth by many tender ties, should even falter on life's verge, (as he may, for he is a frail mortal and nature will have her tribute,) yet faith will prevail. He who has promised never to forsake the believer, will be nigh with his counsel and support, saying, "Fear not; I am with thee. A little longer strive, and all will be well. To him that overcometh, will I give the crown of glory."

The Christian is enabled to endure unto the end by the sustaining presence of his Saviour. He who went down to the grave, that he might open a way through it to the mansions of eternal bliss, has led many a trusting follower along the dark and narrow passage. Many a dying Christian has been able to say, "I am in the valley of the shadow of death; yet I fear no evil, for thou, my Saviour, art with me; thy rod and thy staff comfort and sustain me."

As in life and death, so likewise in the day of judgment, when all mankind shall stand before the tribunal of the Great Judge: Christ will be true to his promise. He will appear as the Advocate of all who have died in faith, trusting in him for salvation; and will present them before his Father's throne, clad in the pure robe of his righteousness, to be admitted as eternal partakers of his glory.

My hearers, if you would be entitled to this cheering promise of our Lord,—if you would have Christ your ever present counsellor, supporter, and friend,—acknowledge him as your divine and only Saviour. Confess your sins, and trust in his merits for pardon and acceptance with God. Profess your faith in him and his ordinances, submit to his holy will in life, and health, and prosperity, that you may be comforted in adversity, sickness, and death; and finally be welcomed to everlasting blessedness, in the kingdom of heaven.

SERMON XXVI.

Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.—ROMANS xii. 2.

THERE seems to be much difficulty among those, who call themselves Christians, in determining the proper value of the Christian ordinances. Some regard them as absolutely essential to salvation; others go to the opposite extreme, and count them as mere ceremonies, that may be dispensed with at pleasure. The church, whose standards we recognise, considers them necessary, where they may be had,—so important in the scheme of divine mercy, set forth for man's redemption, that none can wilfully reject them without peril. St. Paul pays due reverence to them always. But he is also careful to guard his readers against resting on them as sure pledges of salvation. In his Epistle to Titus, he brings together the ordinance of baptism, and the pious disposition which must always accompany it, in the case of a truly accepted professor of religion. "Not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." "The washing of regeneration" here spoken of, is baptism, and it, together with the renewing of the Holy Ghost, constitutes the means of salvation. But the apostle continually exhorts those who have been baptized, to become holy, through the influence of the Holy Spirit, lest they should come short of salvation.

Agreeably to apostolic teaching, the church means, by "baptismal regeneration," the change of relation which sinful men undergo, by being taken from a state of enmity to God, (in which they are born,) and placed in a state of adoption, or salvation, in which the mercies of God are covenanted to them—baptism being the seal of the covenant, securing to all who will comply

with the terms of it, pardon for sin, grace to become holy, and eternal life in the world to come. The terms of the covenant are "repentance and faith"—repentance, whereby the persons coming to baptism forsake sin; and faith, whereby they steadfastly believe the promises of God made to them in that sacrament. Hence, instead of teaching us to rely on baptismal regeneration, as a sure guarantee of eternal life, the church not only presses upon us the necessity of a change of character, marked by conformity of will and disposition to the will of God, but calls them to baptism for the very purpose of affording the means, divinely ordained, of bringing about that change. She follows the injunction of St. Paul to the Romans, which is a true following of the teaching of Christ: "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." This renewing is the work of the Holy Spirit, but the believer has the power of furthering that work; and he will not only suffer loss, but condemnation also, if he does not strive to further it. Christ furnishes the believer with the means of building himself up in godliness. This is the great end to which all religious privileges tend. The burden of Christ's teaching is, that men should be holy, as he is holy—that, without holiness, no man can have eternal bliss in heaven. And in order to induce men to seek that holiness, and help them to obtain it, he has given them promises of final blessedness, and means of grace, by the use of which they will, if faithful to the end, surely obtain it.

By the sacrament of baptism, these promises are made sure to those who receive it, on condition of faith and repentance. By this holy and significant rite, they who were born in sin, without a covenant title to God's mercy, are initiated into the society or church which Christ instituted, and are made members of his body, branches of himself, the true vine, children of God by adoption, and joint heirs with Christ of eternal glory. Once in the fold, the believer has hopes and privileges to animate him in his efforts to win the prize of his high calling. But he also has duties corresponding with his privileges. And the church never offers the privileges, or encourages the hopes, without urging the necessity of discharging these duties.

The baptized believer is never reminded of "the washing of regeneration," without being enjoined to seek diligently "the re-

newing of the Holy Ghost," without which his regeneration will be worse than useless. Not only does she teach this plainly in the Catechism, which is a compend of the doctrines deemed essential to salvation, and which is an instruction designed for all who would enjoy her privileges; but, in the very office for baptism, she offers prayers for such renewing; and more than this, demands of the candidate a solemn vow, "to renounce the devil and all his works, and to keep the commandments of God all his days." Not only does the vow include a profession of belief in all the articles of the Christian faith, as set forth in the Apostles' Creed—one of which is, that Christ shall come again to judge the world, both quick and dead, which should serve to keep the believer in the way of righteousness—but also a promise to give up all the "vain pomp and glory of the world," which, every one knows, must be something different from positive wickedness, or the works of the devil, and yet inconsistent with a truly religious life. Now we put it to the reason and conscience of every one, whether the very conditions, on which baptism is granted, do not require a solemn promise to live up to the full strictness of the gospel measure of holiness? Those who are not of us, are rebuked by this proof of our high standard, when they charge us with looseness of living and unscriptural doctrine; for we challenge them to produce any higher requirement from the New Testament. And those who call themselves Episcopalians, and yet rebel against a discipline conformable to this standard, set up by the church, on the ground that it is higher than that of scripture, are earnestly exhorted to remember that the church, which is the keeper and witness of holy writ, exacts conformity to the rule which she deems scriptural, and that they have vowed it in the rite of admission to her privileges. And we wish to bring the minds of churchmen closely to this subject. We are not willing that any of our brethren in the church, should unwittingly bring reproach upon our pure system, by a want of proper instruction on this point. You, who have been baptized, have promised to renounce "the pomps and vanities of this wicked world"—to give up whatever may be included in this phrase. And it includes those fashionable modes of dissipation in which worldly people indulge, and which give occasion for the development of principles, and the gratification of passions, that are condemned by the strict

rule of Christian obligation. You have vowed not merely to refrain from partaking of these forbidden indulgences, but to check the desire for them, and root out the love of them. The words of the vow are "renounce the vain pomp and glory of the world, and all covetous desires of the same."

It will not do then, for one who has become, by baptism, a professed member of the church, bound by her rules, and entitled to her privileges, to say, in justification of conformity to worldly practices, which are deemed inconsistent with religious vows, "I have a desire for these things, (it would be hypocrisy to pretend that I have not;) and therefore I may as well gratify the desire." For if the desire still exist, after the profession is made, you are bound to do your utmost to repress it. You are not only required to practise self-denial, for your spiritual benefit, if the desire for worldly pleasure be strong, but to subdue your heart into full subjection to the law of holiness, prescribed by the gospel and the church, by conquering your rebellious desires. You may kill a passion by starving, but never by feeding it. And when you reflect that the rule of Christ's requirement regards the thoughts and motions of the heart towards what is forbidden, as sinful, you will count it a breach of your baptismal vow to cherish desires for those things which, if indulged in, would bring reproach upon the church of which you are a member, and upon yourself as a member of it.

It is in the cherishing of holy affections that the religious life chiefly consists. Outward correctness of living, or mere morality, which religion demands, and expects, as a matter of course, may be practised by those who do not believe in any revealed religion. And it is a great pity that any, who call themselves religious, should come behind, as they sometimes do, in the practice of morality, some who avow their utter want of religion. But it is one thing to call oneself religious, and quite another thing to be counted so by the church. To be truly religious is to live, not only in such a way as not to incur condemnation by the Judge of all men, in the day of final retribution, but as if the heart was set upon those joys which will be the Christian's reward in heaven. This is the only way of showing the reality of religion; and the great fault of many professing Christians is, that they do not seem to feel that there is any reality in it. They live for all the delights which worldly people enjoy, with the hope of the super-

added joys which religion offers; or, rather, they separate religion from living entirely—making it consist in a certain state of feeling which, once undergone, becomes a sure warrant of eternal life.

The great error in this system of man's device is, that it is of his device. The church of Christ and the gospel of Christ do not recognise it. These inculcate fixed principles, founded on revealed doctrines, and exemplified by constant practice with their corresponding habits of living. Holy affections are encouraged by the preaching of truths which demand them. Man is required to do what God commands; and he is exhorted to do it because God has shown a degree of love for him which cannot be estimated, in the redemption wrought through Jesus Christ. The peculiar scheme of the religion of the New Testament is, the hold which it seeks to gain on the heart of man, to win him back to that likeness to God which he lost by transgression—by revealing God's love and willingness to pardon, and also his gracious provision of help, to enable the fallen one to rise to that likeness. With this view, the word of scripture, given by divine inspiration, sets forth the propitiation for sin, offered by the Son of God, by whose sufficient sacrifice on the cross, mercy has been so reconciled with justice, that God can pardon the guilty, for Christ's sake, if they seek forgiveness through him. The merits of Christ give him power to send the Holy Spirit, to help the sinner to become holy, after the image of God; and this gift of the Spirit is promised by Christ, to all who will apply for it in the appointed way. It is promised to them who will become members of his church, and, in communion with it, will use diligently the means through which he imparts it. The coming into the church is by baptism, which, as we have said, is a pledge both of pardon for sin, and of grace to become holy. The sacrament of the supper is another principal and often recurring pledge of the same, being at the same time a continual source of the supply necessary to support the spiritual life which is begun in baptism.

These assurances of God's favour, and these offers of God's help, are designed to move man to do what it will be his highest happiness to do—to bend his will to submission to the will of God—to mortify the lusts of the flesh, and fix his desires on objects worthy of the destiny of his soul.

This is the end to be attained by the scheme of divine revela-

tion, namely, a mode of living, which will fit men for the enjoyment of the bliss promised as a reward for it. The acknowledging of this truth, as God's revealed word, is faith; and this is shown by submitting to the sacraments which Christ has ordained, and then by yielding the fruits of faith in the conformity of the will and dispositions of the heart to the moral precepts of Christ. The manifestation of this work of grace in the heart is sanctification; and the beginning to manifest it is conversion—which is another word for turning towards God, in answer to his call. Any notion of conversion, different from this, is a miserable delusion. And if any of you wish to know whether you are converted, you need not look back to some period of your life when you were brought under a wonderful excitement, but look into your hearts, and read your present dispositions, desires, and aims. You will find a sure answer to your careful inquiry. It is this view of the nature of conversion which the church takes when she prays for and enjoins "the renewing of her members' hearts by the Holy Ghost." "Be ye therefore transformed by the renewing of your minds." If baptized into Christ by the Spirit, which sanctifies the water of regeneration, you are citizens of a new commonwealth—that of the Israel of God. Being such, you are placed under its laws, which are new, and opposed to those by which you were once governed. Live according to those laws. In this commonwealth there are high privileges and exalted hopes of honour. Prize these privileges, and cherish these hopes. Be not conformed to this world in your principles or your mode of living; for "the friendship of the world is enmity against God." Baptism was to you a sign of "death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness." "How, then, shall you, who are dead unto sin, live any longer therein?" This is an apostle's pressing appeal, founded upon the plainest inferences from well-established doctrines. Can you, who have solemnly renounced all wickedness, and all subjection to the author of it, as well as "the vain pomp and glory of the world," and "all covetous desires of it," and have done this in view of the promised blessedness which is to be the reward of faithfulness to your vows—can you, in the face of such obligations, give your hearts and minds to sinful or worldly pleasures, in preference to the duties, privileges, and hopes of religion? Will you indulge in envy, malice, and uncha-

ritableness—in lusts that defile the body, or covetousness that eats into the soul like rust? Will you harbour feelings that find their proper home in the prison of the lost spirits? Or encourage habits that would shame a rational being, though he knew that he would perish at death, like the brute forever? Are you not bound, rather, to subdue all passions that tend to degrade you in the scale of being, and strive to foster all those feelings and thoughts which mark your consciousness of a high and glorious destiny? This, surely, is the Christian's acknowledged duty. Let us hear nothing of the "conversion" of one who is a slave to vile lusts, or violent tempers, or who assumes a haughty and tyrannical deportment towards others. Christ represents the temper of his true disciples as that of little children, (and he meant good ones,) for he said to his apostles that he who would be greatest in his kingdom, should be least of all. Meekness, kindness, and love, mark the accepted followers of Christ. Loud professions of piety, accompanied with a hearty hatred of any whom we ought to love, are notes of the devil's best music—sweet to his ears, and dear to him as of his own creation.

Conversion, religiously understood, is a change of will and disposition, wrought by the Spirit of God, which can only change from bad to good—from that which was offensive to God to that which is pleasing to him. Hence, if you are no better than you were before the date of the event, called your conversion, the work then done, whatever it was, or by whomsoever wrought, was not the renewing of the Holy Ghost.

Are you converted? If so, from what, and to what? You were naturally averse to God's law, unwilling to submit to him, regardless of his authority, and inclined to follow your own devices. You were ready to measure your duty by your will—to seek that which would promote your own interest and immediate gratification—to live as if you had no Master, and desired none, but were free to indulge your carnal will and wayward inclinations.

Have you turned about from thus following the way in which you were led, by the nature which you inherited from fallen parents, and started on the new way of obedience to the will of God, as made known in the gospel? If not, you have never been converted; or having once turned into the new path, are you now walking in it, submitting to all the precepts of Christ, and ob-

serving all his ordinances? If not, you need to be converted again. You need earnest and prayerful striving after holiness. You need to be transformed by the renewing of your mind. This is what the church enjoins, according to the word of God, as the evidence and the fruit of faith. To this the vows of the Christian profession bind you; and as helps to this, the sacraments are offered you. You are required by the strictness of the gospel to "crucify your affections and lusts;" and St. Paul declares his own faithfulness, as an example to all who profess to be followers of Christ, when he says, "I am crucified with Christ;" and, "the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." This is true cross-bearing, to practise self-denial, to mortify the carnal lusts, to quell the will and turbulent passions, to carry out into full practice all the principles of the Christian profession, amidst all temptations and discouragements. This is taking up the cross. Would that all understood it. Alas! how much do men deceive themselves with their own devices, which they substitute for God's requirements.

Submit, Christian brethren, to the disciplinary authority of the church, that you may avoid the appearance of evil. Avoid all familiarity with scenes of dangerous dissipation. Be watchful that you give no occasion for the enemies of God to blaspheme; and seek in every mode of spiritual exercise to bring out, into full development, that element of strength and purity, the germ of new life unto righteousness, which is of Christ's own planting. "He that planteth and he that watereth are one." Be yours the careful tilling, and yours will be the glorious harvest-fruit; which you may pluck, as it is ripening, for your daily refreshing, and will finally gather with fulness of joy, in the presence of Him who caused it to grow and abound.

SERMON XXVII.

“But thou hast kept the good wine until now.”—JOHN ii. 10.

THESE words are part of that expression of surprise, uttered by the ruler of the feast, at Cana, in Galilee, when he had tasted the wine which Jesus had miraculously produced. The occasion was a marriage feast, to which our Lord had been invited, memorable not only for being honoured by such a guest, but especially for being the scene of his first miracle, which consisted in changing water into wine by the mere effort of his will.

We are told by the Evangelist that, during the feast, Jesus, hearing that there was a lack of wine, commanded the servants to fill with water some large jars, which usually contained the supply required for the wonted ablutions of the household. The servants filled them to the brim, and then, at his command, drew from the jars wine of a superior quality, and carried it to the ruler of the feast, or master of ceremonies, who, after tasting it, praised its excellent flavour. Surprised at such a deviation from the usual custom at festive entertainments, he said, “Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine, and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good wine until now.” This he said to the bridegroom; for he knew not to whom he was indebted for the unusual luxury. But this was not the bridegroom’s doing; he knew nothing of it; it was the work of Jesus, our Lord.

And, taking the words of our text in their application to the actual provider of the wine, we may derive from them much spiritual instruction. We shall regard the conduct of the host, in this case, contrasted with that of other men on like occasions, as a fit illustration of the blessedness of the Christian life, contrasted with

the delusive character and final misery of a life of sin and worldly pleasure.

The world, with its glittering lures and seducing pleasures, offers good things at first, with which to tempt its votaries, but afterwards gives them dregs of bitterness: Christ, on the contrary, in his dispensation of mercy and peace, though he may offer a mingled cup in the beginning, bestows joys that grow brighter and brighter until the end of life; reserving his best for the last. When we speak of the world, as affording direct contrast to our Saviour's dealings with his followers, in its treatment of its votaries, we mean just what the Christian Scriptures mean when they bid us not to be conformed to this world; namely, whatever is opposed in principle and aim to the dictates and the spirit of true religion, the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ. And we may consider either the philosophy of the world, as it addresses the intellect, or its sensuality, the allurements which it offers to the senses, debasing the nature of man. We mean, by worldly philosophy, such maxims suggested by man's corrupt nature, as regard this life only, and set up selfishness and individual will against the will of God,—principles assumed in opposition to religion, and carried out just as if there were no revealed religion; it is mixed up with sensuality more or less, because a man's life is very rarely better than his creed. But as it is obvious chiefly in its practical results, and as through its sensuality the world exercises its sway over most people, we propose to confine ourselves at this time to this feature of worldliness.

In this view of the subject, we may truly say that the world offers the good wine at the beginning of the feast, the tempting cup of pleasure, to lure the unwary; but when the feast of vanity is well nigh over, then come the dregs of bitterness at the bottom of the cup. Look for a moment at the nature of sensuality, and you will see the force of our illustration. The joys which affect the senses are subject to all the contingencies of their nature. They are, consequently, liable to that loss of power which is the result of a decay of the senses, and the gradual decline of animal strength. Every indulgence of a carnal appetite increases the desire for new stimulants. That which was at first excitement, soon becomes, as it were, the course of nature; and increased stimulants are needed to supply the cravings of a feverish appetite.

Pleasure palls upon the senses, and as the desire continues long after the susceptibility of pleasant excitement ceases to exist, there is left an aching void, which the world cannot fill. Moreover, as the senses lose their power, and a double measure of stimulants is demanded, the animal system is soon tasked beyond its bearing, its life is soon almost spent; nothing is left but a few embers of vitality, which cannot be fanned into a cheering flame, and will not go out; so that a thirst for pleasure remains when no pleasure can be had.

Thus, in the feast of worldly pleasure, the "good wine" is offered at the beginning, but bitterness and sorrow come at the end. Experience of its practical character will fully bear out this conclusion from our views of the abstract nature of sensuality. Ask its many victims, or read their open history before your eyes, and judge for yourselves if we speak truly. We take its grosser forms only as more palpable and striking manifestations of its seductive character, and fatal tendency. Refine it as you will, that which springs from this world and centres in it, will partake of not only its transitoriness, but its unsatisfying nature. Every desire of man, which looks not to eternity for its rule or measure of gratification, will lead him to the conclusion of Solomon, "that all is vanity and vexation of spirit."

We may be cozened into a belief that we are feeding in rich pastures, that will fill us with continual gladness; but we shall, ere long, feel the fatal effects of the noxious weeds, that may not have been discerned by their unpleasant taste. Indeed, we may take a striking illustration of our subject from one of the most fascinating and ruinous forms of worldly pleasure: we mean gaming. The false, deceitful world decoys into its snares all who seek, as their chief good, the indulgence of carnal lusts, like the skilful but dishonest gambler, who suffers his victim to win at first, but, when he has lured the winner into large stakes, strips him of his wealth, and leaves him ruined and desperate. We do not, however, mean to restrict our view to the debasing sensuality whose various forms are well known to you. We would embrace also the little vanities and fashionable follies of the world, and extend our remarks to any and all of the manifestations of complete subjection to worldly influences. We would hold up to reprobation that course of life, of whatever peculiar feature, which is

founded upon a principle opposed to faith in Jesus Christ, or which flows, without principle, in a direction contrary to his solemn warnings and wholesome precepts.

To those who are governed by worldly maxims, and are resolved to live without religious restraints, either hoping for a settled faith before death, or reckless of future retribution, and content to die as they have lived, we hold up the strong contrast between the character and end of worldliness, and the sober joys and sustaining comforts of Christian redemption, applied by faith, and illustrated by godliness. We bid them look seriously, and reflect soberly and long, on the eternal results of human actions, before they seal with their own hands their destiny of woe. Let them consider how much there is at stake, and how dear will be the cost of the brief portion of life spent in frivolous pleasures, if estimated by an eternity of sorrow. It will be better to count the cost now, before they have irrevocably sealed the bargain for their souls, than doom themselves to the misery of counting it hopelessly forever, whilst paying it in full in the retributions after judgment. This reflection is commended to the refined, as well as to the gross sensualist; for it will apply equally to the case of both.

To all who live for this world, we present a view of the case which should strike them forcibly. The joys, which the world has to bestow, are necessarily short-lived, and perish with the using. Youth flatters us with its rich promise; but old age and death soon come to break the spell of enchantment. So frail is the life on earth, that no pursuits, which do not have reference to a future existence, and are not based on principles which will have their full development in another world, can be enduring enough to satisfy the soul.

Here, on earth, all is change; and it is even a change for the worse, unless the desires of man be fixed on things unseen, except by the eye of faith. And they who give themselves up to the fleeting good which worldly pleasure offers, act upon a supposition that is wide of the truth. With them, all seems fair; and therefore they indulge their craving passions; but clouds soon appear, and cover their clear sky. As a Christian poet has beautifully said,—

“The heart of childhood is all mirth;
We frolic to and fro,
As free and blithe, as if on earth
Were no such thing as wo.

“But if we trust the flattering voice
Which whispers, ‘Take thy fill, ere death
Indulge thee and rejoice,’
* * * * *

“Too surely every setting day
Some lost delight we mourn;
The flowers all die along our way,
Till we, too, die forlorn.”

Such is the deceitfulness of the world: it holds out a promise which it can never fulfil. It is all a cheat to those who trust it for their supreme good. The unstable soul is led by its fascinations from one joy to another, and is finally left, unsatisfied in its cravings, helpless and desolate.

But there is a sober certainty of bliss in the Christian faith, and the habitual practice of godliness, which carries the freshness of youth into manhood, and imparts the vigour of manhood to old age. A dedication of the soul to God in Christ Jesus, is a source of joy, and a cheering hope that can never fail.

Here we see the strong point of contrast between the world and religion—between Satan’s deceits and Christ’s promises. Observe how the Lord comforts and cheers, while his enemy mocks and betrays—how religion meets the wants of man’s better nature, while the world ministers to his baser part. Man is prone to look forward continually for happiness: he is always to be blest. In the shifting pageantry of life, hope is the magician’s wand, which opens the vista of the future, and speeds the soul onward in quest of new and higher gratifications. And is there any hope so sure, sustaining, and worthy of firm embrace, as that which is founded on faith in God’s word?

See the difference between the Christian and the worldly man. The one builds his faith upon his hope, believing its promises, until it has mocked him, too often for endurance, when he becomes a prey to melancholy skepticism, or dreadful despair. The other builds his hope upon his faith; and this being sure and steadfast, his hope must be enduring. The prospect of future bliss sustains

him under the trials and disappointments of life; for faith in the promises of God makes the vision plain. The world to come is spread out to his view, distinctly enough to enable him to appropriate to himself the blessings which it has in store for him,—and every exercise of faith must increase its strength; for it cannot be proved groundless, since its full proof lies not in this life. Each act of true faith gives new vigour to the principle. The heart reposes with a firmer and surer trust on the promises of Scripture; and at the close of life, cheerfully testifies that in the dispensation of Divine Providence, what once appeared to be the most bitter allotment, was truly the most signal blessing.

Under the potent touch of Christian faith, thorns are converted into flowers, and blossom sweetly along the pilgrim's path. The way of life, though steep and rugged, becomes soft and smooth as the green sward; and even the descent to the grave loses all its terrors. And at the very moment when the votary of pleasure discovers the cheat, by which he has been duped, the Christian, rich in faith and strong in hope, sees the fulness of the Gospel promise almost within his grasp. The nearer he is to the close of life, when the worldling finds only vanity and vexation of spirit, the nearer he is to the consummation of his sure hope in Christ Jesus, eternal blessedness in the kingdom of heaven. The last ray of his setting sun casts a halo of brightness along the passage to the tomb, and invites him to take that last step, at which human nature shudders, unless guided and sustained by a Divine Saviour.

Thus it appears that, in the precious Gospel, Christ has provided a feast for all who will come to him in faith, in which, as in the marriage feast at Cana, the best portion (the best wine) is reserved until the last. Let it be your care, then, my hearers, to make Christ your portion forever, by a sincere faith in him, that you may realize the blessedness which he has to bestow. The world has little to offer that will reward your devotion: therefore do not give yourselves up to its wicked fascinations, and its besotting pleasures. There are more sober joys within your reach, more worthy of your exalted capacity, which satisfy while they elevate and refine the soul. Submit, then, to the guidance of a merciful Saviour, to the authority of a holy and divine religion, pure in its morality, cheering in its spirit, and sustaining in its assurance of

eternal joy, and peace. Then, having been profited by its wholesome restraints, and comforted by its promises through life, you may be accepted guests at the heavenly feast, which Christ will finally provide for his people, and be blessed partakers of "the cup of salvation." Dash not this cup from your lips, because it sparkles not with the delusive show that crowns the brim of the world's fatal goblet. The pure water of life, drawn from Christ's never-failing fountain, refreshes all who thirst after righteousness.

Let no one hesitate which of the two to choose. Be sober, be wise, and mortify carnal lusts, for the sake of spiritual joys for which the world has no measure of value. If you have hitherto been wanton, and lived in pleasure, such as gives leanness to the soul, cast off the pollution which defiles you, free yourselves from the shackles of sin, now while the way of reformation is open to you. In the hour of death, if it be a sober one, you will not regret that you went not to your final reckoning, like Belshazzar, reeling from his banquet. No: whatever may now be your reluctance to quit the embrace of the world, you will not, at your last hour, sigh for its gilded poison. No man ever repented, at the brink of the grave, that he had become a Christian in early life. "Repentance unto salvation is not to be repented of."

But many, who have been insnared by the tempter in the gay net of worldliness, have bitterly mourned their folly, when the delusive dream was well nigh over:—"Millions of wealth for one moment of time for repentance," has been the despairing cry of more than one conscience-stricken sinner. Who, then, will cling to any of the forms of worldliness—to any of the delusions which shut out from the soul those thoughts and desires which the gospel of Christ seeks to implant? Who will waste the better part of life in riotous living, to feed on husks at last? Who will drink in the besotting or maddening froth that floats on the brim of the cup of vanity, to writhe at last under the torture of the poison which lurks at the bottom?

Think of the strong contrast presented by the text. Hear what it says of the bridegroom of the church: "Thou hast kept the good wine until now." Look well to the end of Christian faith, whose all is precious to the soul; and with this before you, say with the Christian poet, in direct reference to the application of the text,

“Such is thy banquet, dearest Lord,
O give us grace to cast
Our lot with thine, to trust thy word,
And keep our best till last.”

May God give you all such grace, for his infinite mercies' sake,
in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

SERMON XXVIII.

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”—GALATIANS ii. 20.

ST. PAUL wrote to the Galatians with a view to establish them in the true doctrine of salvation through the merciful mediation of Christ. This they were in danger of rejecting, or practically denying, through the efforts of Judaizing teachers, who insisted on the Christian's adherence to the whole law of Moses. To keep them from falling away from the faith which he had inculcated, the apostle shows how the holding to the laws of Moses, as a means of justification before God, would be an utter casting away of the merits of Christ's sacrifice; for if, by the works of any law, either that originally given to our first parents, or that communicated to the chosen people of God on Sinai, man could be justified, then Christ died in vain. He died for sin; yet he had no sin. Hence, for the sins of others, he submitted to death, that they through his suffering of death, might be delivered from eternal bondage.

Under the old covenant, the church of God was put on probation of obedience to positive laws. Under the new covenant, the church is placed in a state of probation through faith in God's promises. The sacrifices of the Mosaic law were but types of the prevailing sacrifice of Christ. The ceremonies were only figures of the purifying of the soul through the grace which he would bestow. Hence, to fall back upon these types and figures, now that the real fulfilment of them has been revealed, would be denying the efficacy of Christ's mediation, and of course rejecting the offered justification through him.

The occasion for stating the conclusion, as set forth in the

text, was the vindication of his claims to the apostleship, in the course of which, St. Paul mentions the rebuke which he administered to St. Peter for dissembling with the Gentiles. Peter had obeyed the call to preach to them the glad tidings of salvation through Christ, of whose kingdom they were to be partakers with the Jews. In order to prove his sincerity, he sat at meat with them, which the Jews, who clung to the strictness of their exclusive system, would not do. But when some of his Jewish brethren, who contended for the exact observance of the law of Moses, came where he was, he kept aloof from the Gentiles, through fear of these brethren. Paul sharply reproved this double dealing, and urged him to show consistency of conduct. His argument was this: "If Christ had broken down the partition wall between the Jew and the Gentile, and the ceremonial law had been abrogated, why did he any longer keep up the distinction, by holding the Gentiles unclean?" He then declared his own faith, and his inflexible principles—that, as for himself, he no longer acknowledged subjection to the law of Moses; and he at the same time declares that justification cannot be grounded on obedience to law; for by the curse of a broken law we are doomed to death—by law we have died; so that, if we live, we must live by the grace of God. As one who hopes for divine favour through faith in Christ, he says, "For I through the law am dead to the law:" "I am crucified with Christ." That is, as a member of Christ's body, the apostle speaks as if he had suffered just what Christ the body suffered; and this may be said of every believer. As Christ suffered death for us, who believe in him, we are said to have been actually put to death in him. So everything which Christ underwent was, according to the same view, shared by his believing members. They are said to "be put to death in the body of Christ;" "our old man was crucified with him;" we were "buried with him by baptism;" "are dead from the elements of the world;" and "are risen with Christ." All these, and other like expressions, which the apostle uses freely and with much apparent satisfaction, serve to mark, and bring to mind forcibly the great fundamental doctrines of our religion, namely, that Christ became man, and was crucified and buried, and that he rose again, to deliver us from sin and its penalty, in order to procure for us a resurrection to eternal blessedness.

The first clause of our text being thus explained, and the apostle, in this view of it, having died in Christ, by the breaking of the law, which required such an expiation, the other parts of the text may be explained as corollaries to the first conclusion. "Nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Through faith in Christ he has hope of life everlasting; hence he lives by Christ—or, to keep up the figurative style of speaking, Christ lives in him. He magnifies the Lord, who died for him, giving praise to the name of his Redeemer.

Let us view this passage not merely as a statement of doctrine—of the great truth that the Christian's whole hope must be founded on the grace of God in Christ Jesus, but likewise as an avowal of submission to that doctrine—as the testimony given by a believer to his devotion to the cause of Christ; for such a meaning will the text really bear.

St. Paul may be said to have here expressed his entire conversion—the complete surrender of himself to the Lord Jesus Christ. "He is crucified with Christ." The "old man," with all his sinful lusts, and wicked imaginings, is slain; and he has "put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness." He is "dead unto sin, and alive unto righteousness." He has undergone an entire transformation of character. All his habits of life, and all his principles of action, are changed. New desires fill his soul, and new motives prompt him to action. He is like one risen from the dead, who has cast off the habiliments which shrouded corruption, and has appeared in a new body, on which the Spirit of God has left its visible influence. He describes in his own person the spiritual life of a true believer in Christ. Through Christ's mediation, the gift of eternal life is bestowed; and St. Paul expresses, by a bold figure of speech, the self-annihilation of the true Christian, who feels his entire dependence on the blessed Saviour. He lives through Christ; and hence it is not he who lives, but Christ who lives in him. Henceforth he walks as seeing things that are invisible, through faith in Christ Jesus, who has revealed a world of bliss beyond the grave. His affections are set on things above; his desires tend heavenward, and all his life is spent in a state of

preparation for that kingdom above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

Having this hope of an inheritance incorruptible, and that fadeth not away, he purifieth himself, that he may attain that holiness without which no man can see God. With him, Christ is all in all. A Saviour's love opened the way of salvation in which he walks, and imparted that spiritual life which he now lives; and a Saviour's grace, continually bestowed, sustains him in the same. Trusting in that inestimable love, he believes that the same grace, which has begun a good work in him, will perfect the same unto the coming of his Lord in the glory of heaven. Here is an example of a thorough Christian, and a standard by which the life of a believer may be regulated. He must "die unto sin, and live unto righteousness." The affections of his heart must be elevated, and his desires purified. He must live no more unto the world, but unto God, through Christ Jesus, seeking his glory, through obedience to his commandments, and an entire submission to his will. He must yield himself soul and body to God. The soul, by meditation upon the goodness and mercy of God; and the body, by active exertions in the ways of holiness, must equally promote the advancement of his glory. The Christian should live unto God through Christ; and all his desires and affections Godward, are based upon the love which wrought redemption from sin. The love of God is the life of the soul; and this love is challenged by the self-sacrifice of him "who loved us and gave himself for us." It is claimed by him, and must be offered through him, as the Mediator of the new covenant of grace, by which we are made the children of God—as the strength and support of that new relation in which we stand to the Father of all, as the Sanctifier of all the offerings of praise, and the helper of all the prayers with which we approach the throne of grace—our hope and assurance forever.

God is set forth to the subjects of Christ's kingdom, the same holy and awful being, (infinite in power, and terrible in majesty to the wicked,) as he was represented to the Jews of old. But the terrors of Sinai have given place to the peaceful scenes of Bethlehem, and the sea of Galilee: they are effaced by the awful grandeur of Calvary, and swallowed up in the depth of heavenly joy, which flows from the great sacrifice.

The law of God—the moral law—so holy, just, and good, is as binding upon the followers of Christ, as it was upon the disciples of Moses, and if possible it is more so: but it binds with the bands of love.

“Verily thou art a God to be feared,” was the confession of an awe-stricken worshipper under the old covenant. But “God is love,” is the testimony of the gospel—the assurance of faith in Christ Jesus. Obedience is now commanded with equal authority, indeed, but from different motives, and with the encouragement of better hopes. “I will write my law in their hearts, and they shall obey me,”—not through fear of punishment, or hope of meriting pardon; but from grateful love; “for I will forgive their sins, and I will remember their iniquity no more.” In other words, the pardon shall be grounded upon such an exhibition of the divine character, and shall be proclaimed in such a manner, that the hearts of men will be drawn to love and obedience. The believer is drawn to God by our Lord Jesus Christ, who is set forth in the gospel, crucified for the salvation of all who believe in him.

We may now clearly understand what the apostle means when he says, “The life which I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God.” He now lives in the hope, and as the heir, of eternal happiness—called to this state of joyful anticipation and eager longing, by the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the author of eternal life, the source of the grace which sustains the believer in that life, and who is to be the chief joy of the blissful world beyond the grave. The ground of his hope is faith in the sufficient atonement offered by Christ crucified. Upon this manifested love of Christ his faith fastens, and elings to it with a tenacity which nothing can loosen. His conviction of sin and unworthiness grows with his contemplation of that love for sinful man: his hope of forgiveness and justification is built upon it, and his desire and striving after holiness are prompted by gratitude for undeserved mercy.

He believes that Christ died that he might live; therefore he lives through Christ. He believes that, without the sustaining grace of his Saviour, he should cease to live; therefore Christ lives in him continually; and he obeys the will of God with the promptness and fervour of love, moved by the love of Christ which reconciled him to God.

And this is the pattern of faith and holiness which every Christian should endeavour to imitate. But the standard, by which most Christians regulate their lives, is very far below that prescribed by Christ, and inculcated by his apostle. In these days, and in our midst, they who name the name of Christ, seem to be satisfied with themselves "if they depart from iniquity." Would that they all were careful to do this! Would that the profession of religion was not deemed so compatible with practical wickedness, that shrewd men of the world are led to believe that religion is quite an independent feeling, not affecting the character of the person embracing it. Consider the high and holy pattern set by St. Paul. When Christ was revealed to him, he surrendered himself unreservedly to the whole counsel of God. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" was his unconditional offer of devotion to the service of his Saviour,—and he was faithful to his vow through life. But do those who look to him for instruction follow his teaching, so well illustrated by consistent living? Do they grasp the truth with eagerness, with a longing for the fruits of the Spirit?

How few can be found, among the many who make pretensions to piety, who deny themselves a single gratification, not absolutely immoral, in obedience to the precept of that Master who said, "If any man will be my disciple, let him take up his cross daily, and follow me." Alas! alas! how few of those, who call themselves Christians, live through faith in Christ, making spiritual things their chief joy, and using this world as the temporary dwelling-place of the body, not the home of the soul! And yet, if they have a true faith, their lives are otherwise very inconsistent. If they really believe the gospel, they must believe that in a future world holiness will be the vital principle of existence; that as soon as they have put off this earthly tabernacle, they must enter upon a state of being for which only the spiritual life of this world can prepare them. The Christian must live unto God through Jesus Christ. So says the apostle: and he gives a substantial reason for it. "Ye are bought with a price; wherefore glorify God in your body and your spirit, which are his."

But is it common for Christians to live to the glory of God—to consider whether all their doings are righteous in his sight, through a sanctifying faith in the Lord Jesus? Do they pause

to inquire whether a habit which they are indulging, or an action which they are about to perform, is not only allowed by the gospel, but, whether it will promote the glory of God? Let these questions be answered to your own heart. We should glorify God in our body, as well as in our spirit. Hence a habit of mystic devotion—a life spent in religious ecstasy, for our own gratification, in the enjoyment of worship, or of the social interchange of the cant of religion, is not the best mode of exemplifying the Christian profession. A life of active piety, useful to the world, redounds most to the glory of God.

When the children of Israel, groaning under bondage in Egypt, cried out to Pharaoh, saying, "Let us go up and sacrifice to the Lord our God," he suspected their motives, and replied, with much harshness, "Ye are idle, ye are idle: therefore ye say, Let us go and do sacrifice to the Lord!" Let the indolent Christians, who give themselves up to religious pastime, instead of doing their Master's work in the world, be careful lest they justly incur such a rebuke. To the religious dreamers we would say, Go, feed and clothe the poor; teach them and their children the way of godliness; comfort the sorrowing, and nurse the sick; and then go home, and rule your own tempers and your households, praising God for showing you the road to happiness and peace. As Christians, you should feel that you are bought from sin and death by the Lord Jesus Christ, and that you are not your own to give or withhold; that all your energies of soul and body are to be devoted to God, through Christ, to the setting forth of his glory, and to the establishment of the Redeemer's kingdom. Such a sense of obligation should they have who profess to be disciples of the Saviour, which confounds self-righteousness, and leads to the humble confession, "When we have done all that we were commanded to do, we are unprofitable servants." Do you say, "This is too strict a religion?" If it is, we do not make it. We only do our duty to the church, which inculcates it according to the word of God, committed to her. It is a strict religion, it is admitted; but its strictness lies in its purity, which is a mark of its divine origin; and of this no believer can properly complain.

The fulness of salvation demands the fulness of devotion. Is it not worth the price? Christ gave himself for you. Should you not give yourself to him? You cannot do too much, if you

give him all. Can you do enough? Christ says, No; and his apostle says, No. When St. Paul was called to be a Christian, he humbly asked his Lord's will; and when he learned it, he strove to do it, at whatever cost. And he says to all who profess faith in the doctrines which he preached, "Follow me, as I follow Christ." Let this pattern of holiness be constantly before you; and as he feared lest while he preached to others he might be a castaway, so may you fear lest, do what you may, you may never attain that perfection which he attained.

Onward, is the Christian's watchword through life. Never be satisfied that you have done enough, while there is any thing still to do. But after the example of the apostle, "forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forward to those which are before, press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." This prize is a glorious one, promised to all who shall endure unto the end. Strive earnestly to win it; but dream not of securing it without running the race that is set before you in the gospel. You have labours and trials to endure—labours of stern duty, and labours of love—trials of temper, of patience, of faith. You have temptations without, and corruption within, against which you must wage war continually. You must work abroad, and work at home, and there especially—the inward warfare knows no end, and is often fierce. It is hard to keep down wicked self—still harder to subdue righteous self. Spiritual pride may do as much mischief as carnal lust. Be holy, for holiness is the fruit of the Spirit, which is Christ's gift; but be humble, lest you deny the grace of God, and take credit to yourselves for deservings in his sight.

We have spoken of labours and trials; for such must be the Christian's experience. But what are all the labours, and sacrifices, and sorrows of this short life on earth, even if they were not made tolerable by the grace of God, compared with that rest which remaineth for the people of God—the peace and joy of eternity? Brethren in the Lord, since we live through Christ, let us live to him, devoting ourselves to his service, that in the great day of account, we may be received with the welcome assurance of our Saviour, "Well done, good and faithful servant! enter into the joy of your Lord; inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

SERMON XXIX.

“Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.”—ACTS xxvi. 28.

THIS was the prompt confession of king Agrippa, moved by the preaching of St. Paul. It was the forced tribute to the eloquence and strong reasoning of the apostle, wrung from a man who, when left to himself, found the Christian profession too great a sacrifice. In this he was not singular. And with his confession for our theme, we propose to consider what is meant by being altogether a Christian, and also some of the hinderances to a full profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, as our only and perfect Redeemer. And may the Holy Spirit bring home to your hearts whatever may be fitly spoken.

Agrippa is the representative of a class, existing in all ages of the church. There are many in our own day, who, like him, are almost persuaded to be Christians, but who are kept back from being such, by various motives, perhaps the same which restrained him; as pride and false shame, the power of lust, or love of the world. Whatever may be the chief obstacles usually encountered, (and we shall glance at some of them by and by,) it is certain that many are hindered from becoming the avowed followers of Christ, who, we have reason to believe, are sometimes almost induced to take the decisive step.

Whether it be at a season of great affliction, or of an unwonted stirring of a whole community on the subject of religion, there are occasions, golden periods for the soul, if rightly improved; when persons living within the sound of the gospel, to which they have been wont to close their ears, are strongly moved to seek the way of salvation. And it is to those who have often been called to embrace the truth, that we ordinarily preach the gospel,

not to the Jew, who, like Agrippa, was half induced to give up a religion, divine in its authority, but whose period was accomplished, for another ordained to supersede it; nor to the heathen, who, having no knowledge of either, worships the gods of his own making. No; such are not the persons that come within the range of our ordinary ministry. Yet we have to work upon material that offers not less resistance to our efforts. We do not so much seek to change men's religion—as strive to give religion to those who really have none at all; to open the eyes of those who are wilfully blind to the light that is poured upon them from on high; to rouse those who are slumbering upon the sharp points of God's broken law to a sense of their danger, and to urge those who trust to a hereditary or a sacramental religion, to seek for evidences of a personal interest in the appointed means of redemption from sin and eternal death; to feel that they are personally liable to condemnation, and must each for himself submit to God's authority, and give evidence of an entire subjection of the soul to his revealed will.

For we have to do with those, who, born of parents calling themselves Christians, in a land where the Christian religion is generally recognised as of divine origin, either from indifference to their eternal welfare, or the love of ease and present indulgence, or some of the various hinderances to godliness, entirely disregard its sanctions. And when we urge such persons to be Christians, we mean something more than to exhort them to acknowledge the authenticity of the New Testament, and the duty of making themselves acquainted with the truths written on its sacred pages.

We look to the reception of the doctrines of Christ as a rule of life, and the ground of hope for the soul's eternal welfare, to the full appreciation of Christ himself, as a Mediator between God and man, and to such a connexion with him as will bring the soul of a sinner into a peaceful relation with his offended Maker.

What, then, was the nature of Christ's mission, what his office, and the true spirit of his teaching? In short, what is the essence of Christianity? We answer, the doctrine of the atonement, by which sinful man can be assured of God's pardoning mercy; and that of sanctification, or of being made holy by the influence of God's Spirit, procured by Christ's intercession, and as the fruits of his meritorious sacrifice. And what are the means by which

these precious benefits may be made our own? Repentance and faith. A sorrowful confession and forsaking of sin, through a sincere belief in the word of God, declaring Christ's merciful mediation, and a prompt reception of his ordinances, with a careful striving to live after his holy pattern. The penitent believer in Christ, the great propitiation, must become a member of his church by baptism, for two reasons. First, that he may attest by a formal surrender of himself to his Lord, the reality of his faith; and secondly, that he may be brought within the circle of the Holy Spirit's influence, which flows in appointed channels. It is to the church that all the assurances of God's saving grace are given, and the church consists only of the baptized. In all the history of the apostolic church, we find not a single record of union with the church, without baptism, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, which was the formula prescribed by Christ, in the commission given to his ministers; a prescript form, which of itself, if there were no other text of scripture on the subject, is enough to establish the doctrine of the Trinity.

The children of believing converts came, by the same rite of baptism, into the church with their parents, and so long as they continued to believe in Christ, and to submit to his authority, after they came to years of discretion, they continued (as such children now do,) to enjoy all the privileges of the Christian covenant. But if they turned away from following Christ, departed from the way of holiness, and became dead in trespasses and sins, reckless of God's law, and of the promises made known in the gospel; they could have no security in their baptism against eternal condemnation. Although they had been regenerated sacramentally, they must be renewed spiritually, before they can become heirs of the glorious inheritance laid up for Christ's own faithful disciples.

So must it be now with those baptized in infancy, who have not improved their spiritual privilege, the covenant pledge of the merciful Redeemer. To the unbaptized person, therefore, who avows his speculative belief in the divine authority of the Christian religion, we say, that to be a Christian indeed, he must so trust in Christ as a Saviour, as (first) to submit to baptism, confessing his sins and his need of pardoning mercy, and (then) strive,

through a belief in that mercy pledged to him in the ordinance, to lead a holy life; strive diligently with prayer for spiritual help, and the faithful use of the ordinary means of grace, reading and hearing of the word, common prayer in the house of God, and the spiritual food of the body and blood of Christ in the holy sacrament of the supper.

To those who have already received Christian baptism, and have thus been made members of the church of Christ, but have been living far from God, unconscious of the sins which separate them from him, or lightly estimating them, and so lightly esteeming the office of the divine Saviour; we hold up the double guilt of departing from the God whose favour is eternal life, and of despising the covenant promise of the grace which leads to it; and bid them consider, with a recollection of the awful sanctions of divine revelation, what it is to be at enmity with God. To be Christians indeed, heirs of the promises, they must repent of their sins, and renew the vows which they made, or ratify those made in their name, at their baptism; bow their souls before God in humble submission to his authority, casting down every high thought, which their own carnal will would set up against his will made known through Christ; throw off the shackles of worldliness, and fearlessly avowing that they are not ashamed of the Christian profession, stand up in the midst of a world at enmity with Christ, as the advocates of his cause, breathing his lovely spirit, and walking in the path of his commandments. To be Christians, is to confess yourselves the children of grace, redeemed by the grace of the divine Saviour, nourished by the grace of the Spirit in the life of holiness, and cheered under all trials by the hope of the crown of glory, which will be the final and highest manifestation of grace in the kingdom of God.

To be Christians, God's children by adoption, the heirs of a glorious inheritance, sinful, unhappy, perishing creatures will not be persuaded. And we propose to show why they will not, to point out some of the difficulties in their path to salvation, to glance at some of the features of resemblance which many now bear to the almost persuaded Agrippa, moved by the preaching of St. Paul.

Some there are who have lived in habits of self-indulgence, till they have become impatient of restraint, and because they do not

like to retain God in their knowledge, close their minds against the evidence of direct revelation from God. They are unwilling to believe, because faith demands too great a sacrifice. Who does not know how effectually a corrupt inclination, and a depraved will, shut out from the mind the clearest truth? They who love wickedness, will sometimes trust themselves within the reach of gospel ordinances, perhaps will often come to church, trusting in their power to resist the word of God. They will listen, perhaps, to the arguments and appeals of the preacher till they begin to feel the power of truth, when sin, trembling in its seat, interposes its allurements, and the ambassador of Christ is dismissed, with the plainly signified assurance, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

Again, there may be found an unbeliever, who has been noted for his impious daring, who has earned a high reputation among cavillers, for his blasphemous wit, and ingenious skepticism. He too has been startled by the flashes of divine truth, that gleam from the pages of the Bible, and has hid his face from the light that he could not bear. His understanding, indeed, may be convinced, but his heart still clings to his idols, and refuses submission to the true God. A false shame and the fear of ridicule, (a weapon that he has often wielded, and whose temper he well knows,) keep him from embracing the faith which he once despised, and becoming the humble suppliant of the Saviour, whom he has often reviled. How can he meet, as a professed disciple of Christ, the irreligious companions who have often listened to his bold scoffings? He that has been wont to regard believers as "weak-minded, led away by nursery-tales, or caught in the snares of priest-craft," shall he breathe the language of prayer and confession, and wear the badge of subjection to ghostly dominion? No; let the thunder of God's law echo in his ears, and the lightning of God's wrath flash before his eyes, he heeds still more the roar of laughter from the infidel club, and the fire of wit from his rivals in profanity, and though almost persuaded, he cannot be a Christian.

Having already alluded to the grossly wicked, we point to those who are drawn away from a religious profession, by the fascination of worldly pleasure, or are hindered from a practical exhibition of the principles of their profession, by the love of world-

liness. These are a numerous class. The Christian profession demands, they know, the sacrifice of many of the enjoyments in which they now indulge themselves; the true and faithful disciple of Christ must "crucify the world and the flesh," have new principles and higher aims, mortifying his ungodly desires, and restraining his carnal inclinations. The precepts of the gospel are too rigid for them, the joys of religion are too spiritual, and its rewards too remote.

The pleasures which the world holds out, are within the reach of the senses, they are more defined and intelligible to the grosser mind, and they accord more fully with the inborn corruption of man, which keeps him at enmity with God. The conviction of duty, wrought by the word of God occasionally pondered, must be strong indeed to overcome these counteracting forces. It is strong, perhaps, but sin is stronger, and draws away the heart from God. The nominal believer is almost persuaded to take up the cross, and honour his divine Master. But the love of ungodliness quells the risings of conscience, and silences the convictions of duty; the dazzling picture which the world presents, of the joys which perish with the using, distracts the mind from the contemplation of eternal bliss, and he who calls himself a Christian, sinks into the pit which Satan has prepared for his soul.

Among the hinderances to the conversion of sinners to the way of godliness, we should not fail to notice the restraining influence of domestic and social ties. Few need be told how eager true Christians are, (as they surely should be) to bring within the fold where they find spiritual pasture, all who are dear to them. And, perhaps, there is as little need to declare the frequency and strength of that opposing feeling, which keeps a person who is almost persuaded, from being a professed Christian. The person under conviction, struggles between a desire to embrace a hope, which will demand a separation from those who are loved, and with whom he has been long associated, and a clinging to the associations which habit has made familiar, and affection has hallowed. Sometimes a willingness is manifested to make common cause with all who are dear, and to share their fate even in a future world. On the other hand, when a breach is about to be made in a social or domestic circle, a strong desire is usually excited to prevent it. And many are the motives combining to oppose the movement.

Jealous affection fears a rival in the new attachment. Pride of opinion is sensitive under the implied rebuke, and these two feelings call to their aid some bitterness of resentment, against the instrumentality by which the change of relation is brought about, extending even to the doctrines preached, and leading to a reviling of the system of religion of which they form a part. It is hard to contend with such double opposition, and conviction may be soon overpowered. Oh, how true it is, in reference to such matters, that "a man's foes are they of his own household."

It may well be a source of deep regret, and pious sorrow, to one who is urged to assume the vows, and receive the consolations of the Christian religion, that loved ones stand aloof from the altar in utter unconcern, or perhaps in mockery; but it is surely not a good reason for withholding such a profession. Yet he may be restrained by a painful sense of sickness at heart, in view of such a required separation, and be prompted to stay with the friend, whom Christ cannot win, saying, like Ruth to Naomi, "Whither thou goest, I will go: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." But whatever may be your hinderances, my hearers, it is in vain that you are almost Christians. You must yield all your heart to Christ. The world may cheat you into the belief that you can serve two masters. But you cherish a fatal delusion. You may have "the form of godliness without the power thereof." But you cannot be the true disciples of Christ, and "have fellowship with the works of darkness." The Saviour must be your all, or you are none of his.

What advantage then, will it be to you, who, like Agrippa, have heard the word, and been almost persuaded to be a Christian, that you have been on the verge of conversion, but have failed to take the final decisive step? You may be as near to the enjoyments of a future world, as you were to a saving faith, and yet, like the fabled Tantalus, be doomed to behold almost within your reach, that which you vainly seek to grasp. And when the rich rewards of a steadfast faith, are bestowed upon his faithful ones by the glorified Redeemer, it may be your lot to hear from his lips this fearful doom, "Thou hast no part or lot in this matter. Thou wast almost persuaded to be a Christian. Now thou art almost admitted to the Christian's promised bliss. Thine eyes behold the glory of the faithful followers of the Lamb, but thou

canst not attain it." May God in his mercy deliver all of you, my people, from such a doom.

If any of you are so moved by the conviction of your sinfulness, and the exceeding love of God in Christ Jesus, as to be almost persuaded to embrace the salvation which he offers, we appeal to you as responsible beings, that must stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, and be eternally rewarded or punished, according to your improvement of your means of grace, and ask with much concern, "How long halt ye between two opinions?" Choose ye this day whom ye will serve. And may God give you grace to choose aright, for your own salvation, and for the honour and glory of our blessed Redeemer. But we cannot dismiss our subject without noticing some particular persons: those, who, when the word of God is preached to them earnestly, and pressed upon their consciences in private, acknowledge their obligation to receive it as the rule of life, and to share the high privilege of its promises of eternal bliss; who say, "they admit that the gospel is a reasonable system, and they do not question its truth, and divine origin; but they cannot so believe it, as to be fully governed by it. We cannot say that we do not believe that it is all that it purports to be; but we do not feel deeply the solemn truths which it proclaims. We do not deny the truth of the declaration, that eternal life or everlasting condemnation, hangs upon the decision which we may make in reference to the offer of grace. But we have not been able to realize either the peril of unbelief, or the blessedness of true faith. Our reason assents to the claim set up by the gospel, but our heart leans not to the covenant of peace." Now why cannot these persons be persuaded to be Christians? May it not be that there is a secret feeling of self-righteousness, a confidence in their own moral purity, which blunts the edge of God's declared truth? Do they not in their hearts say, we cannot see our need of God's grace? We cannot understand how we should be required to submit to the yoke of Christ. We see no such sinfulness as calls for any atonement, but a purpose to be better.

Perhaps, too, they compare themselves in their outward deportment with many who have professed to be Christians; and hug themselves with quiet satisfaction in their indifference. And if they would persuade themselves, that they strive to bring their

minds to deep reflection, we ask if they give such attention to the matter, as they would bestow upon some matter of worldly interest? Do they apply themselves to the work of religion, with the same energy with which they seek a fortune in the pursuit of worldly business, or the acquisition of any language which they desire to learn, or the pursuit of any science? If they must confess that they do not, let them not say that they have tried to become Christians. But let them know that they do not desire the things of Christ, in comparison with the things of the world. And let them earnestly endeavour to comprehend the righteousness of the law, which condemns the sinner, and the vastness of that love of God which has freely offered them pardon for sin, and strive, with God's Spirit, to subdue their hearts unto faith, love and obedience. Labour to know how much your sins have offended God, how much love he manifested in offering you pardon, and how much bliss there is in the sense of acceptance with God; and then may you be not almost, but altogether persuaded to be a Christian.

SERMON XXX.

“For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”—2 TIMOTHY i. 12.

EXPERIENCE only can enable one fully to appreciate that unshaken confidence which is felt by him, who, in time of trouble, knows that he has committed himself to a power which cannot fail. In whatever shape trouble may come, whether it assail the person, the worldly possessions, or the moral welfare of man, the stronger his faith is in the security of his trust, the greater will be his courage, his fortitude, and his peace of mind. To know that he leans on a rock which cannot be moved, that he has placed his deposit in the keeping of one who is above all suspicion, or that he has submitted himself to the guidance of one who can neither deceive nor be deceived; to know this is to have a shield against every arrow of adversity.

Such confidence had St. Paul, when he wrote the words of our text. He was in prison at Rome, during the reign of the bloody Nero. He had gone through many grievous trials; persecution in every form awaited him for Christ's sake, wherever he preached Christ; and now, when he felt that his “time to be offered up was at hand,” deserted by nearly all his fellow Christians, who should have clung to him in his hour of greatest need—at this dark period he declares that he is not ashamed of Christ, or afraid to acknowledge him. He is more than ever confident, and for the very reason that he had passed through so many trials—because in all these he had experienced the sustaining power of his Lord. He had often put his Lord to the proof, and had found him faithful. And as each new trial afforded new proof of the certainty of his hope in Christ, he could at last say in the face of approaching

martyrdom, "I know whom I have believed," (or *trusted*, as the word truly means;) "my faith is now strengthened by experience." He had been sustained in the discharge of his perilous ministry, by the hope of a crown of glory at the day of Christ's second appearing. And he looked forward to that day with a settled confidence, because Christ had justified all his hopes, by fulfilling all the promises in which he had trusted, so far as in this world they could be fulfilled. He had staked all—every thing that could make life dear to a distinguished Jew—upon his faith in Jesus. The scorn of his former fellows, and the hatred of the rulers of his nation every where pursued him; and the violence of the mob, influenced by their hatred, caused him to be baited and gored like a wild beast. And if "in this life only he had hope in Christ, he was of all men most miserable." But this was not his case. The Lord whom he served had been nigh to him in all his afflictions—had shielded him from death, when death seemed almost inevitable, and had given him spiritual consolation and support, under all the bodily sufferings which he could not escape. And when death was close at hand—death by the bloody hand of the godless heathen executioner, he was not daunted—his faith faltered not. "I know whom I have believed:" I have put myself soul and body, in the hands of a Saviour, "who is God over all, and blessed forever; and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." "That day" to which the apostle refers, is the day of Christ's second coming, of "his glorious appearing," as it is called, in another portion of his writings. And the trust which he had committed to his Lord, is that hope of eternal glory, for which he had counted all worldly things as loss. This confidence in the future, was founded on the evidence of the past; and we may draw from the text these two truths, that faith in Christ grows by experience into actual knowledge, and that this knowledge of the Saviour induces confidence in him.

Faith necessarily brings experience, and experience as directly leads to knowledge. The true believer cannot live in faith, without having some experience of the power of faith.

We would be among the last to make religion consist in frames and feelings; we think there is much delusion on this subject among those who profess to be the disciples of Christ. But we

do not hesitate to declare, that a Christian thoroughly imbued with the spirit of faith, must, and will have a real sense of the power of faith, and of the preciousness of Christ. He will be able to refer to his experience for proof of the truth of the holy Scriptures, for confirmation of his faith. He will find the word of Christ fulfilled in himself—the spiritual promises of Christ made good to his soul, from time to time, and he will at last come to know him in whom he has trusted. This result of strong habitual faith, is the armour of proof which defends the unlettered Christian against the sneers of the scoffer, and the ingenious arguments of the learned skeptic. He cannot argue, perhaps, or detect the fallacy of his opponent's reasoning; and he might, therefore, seem to be in danger of falling into apostacy. But though he may know nothing of the external evidences of Christianity, and could not therefore gainsay any false historic statement, or solve any historic doubt, which the infidel may bring to the assault of his faith, he can intrench himself behind the strong wall of his experience, knowing from this that he believes the truth. And the secret of the believer's strength may be easily learned, when we consider that one fact is worth a hundred arguments in settling any disputed question. His knowledge of Christ amounts to matter of fact. It is not a mere presumption, founded on what he had heard of the gospel, it is actual experience of its power. It is not mere speculation, such as the philosopher brings to bear upon the subject of a religion that must be proved by human testimony. It is not a deliberate, careful analysis of a medicine, published to the world as a universal remedy for spiritual diseases. The believer has taken the medicine, has tested its quality, and knows its power to heal. But this knowledge, which protects the Christian against the assaults of the infidel, is not all which the believer gains by experience, or rather, this is not the only use of such knowledge. It does not merely cause him to hold fast his faith, but to grow stronger and stronger in it. Each act of true faith adds strength to the principle, and is the seed sown in the heart, which yields fruit after its kind.

The first pledge which a converted man gives to his Saviour, binds himself in a perpetual covenant—a treaty offensive and defensive against the world, sin and the devil. In this moral war-

fare, Christ is pledged to furnish the armour and the strength. The believer is bound for the constant, faithful exercise of the weapons, trusting in the promised strength—the might of his unconquerable Captain. God has promised the believer in Christ, that he never shall be tried with temptations greater than he can bear, but that a way of escape shall always be provided. Yet there is but one way provided, and the Christian must take this way. If, therefore, temptations beset him on every side, if the world cast its lures in the path of the believer, he is only to throw himself upon his faith in Christ. If he has gone too far into the toils of Satan, through a momentary trust in his own power, he has but to send up an earnest prayer to the mercy seat, and succour will be sent. If any rising passion has obtained for a time the mastery over his religious principle, he has but to call over that evil spirit, the name of Jesus, and he is speedily exorcised. As often then as he does this, as often as he applies to the Saviour for promised help, he proves that Saviour; and learns to know whom he has trusted. Having found Christ true to his word in one case, he will trust him the more readily in another. Having passed safely through lesser dangers, under the protection of his Lord, he will be cheered in the midst of those which are greater, and more terrible, by the assurance that the same mighty arm is stretched out to shield and deliver him. So that having proved in his own experience, during his whole life, the truth and efficacy of the divine promises, (so far as they were applicable to his case,) he is prepared at the last, when he is about to enter upon the untried world, to believe that Christ is the resurrection and the life eternal, and that there is laid up for him, by his Saviour, a crown of glory; such things as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath the mind of man conceived.

We have shown a necessary connexion between faith and experience, and between experience and knowledge. There can be no mistake in this. The Christian life must bring experience; and having experienced the power of Christ, the believer knows that he has power. Having trusted in him alone, (nor trusted in vain,) he knows whom he has trusted. The true believer, he who has tasted that the Lord is gracious, obtains a knowledge of Christ which is very precious. He knows Christ to be just what the Scriptures represent him to be. Having felt the burden

of sin, and cast that burden at the foot of the cross, bearing away with him, instead of it, a song, one of those "songs in the night," of which Job speaks, and which the Lord our Maker giveth, he knows that Christ "is the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world." Having often felt "the law in his members, warring with the law of God," (and his inability to keep this law,) he has cast himself upon the great satisfaction of the divine law, and has learned to know Christ as our righteousness. He must have been singularly exempt from the usual trials of life, if he has not been bowed with sorrow, and been fain to pour out his grief in the bosom of the great Sympathizer. Having done so, he must have acquired the knowledge of Christ, as the comforter of the mourner, the "man of sorrows," who "can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." He cannot have lived in contact with the defilements of the world, exposed to temptations on every side, without feeling his own weakness, and the need of a holiness not his own, the inworking of the Spirit; and having cast himself upon the great Sanctifier, has found Christ to be his sanctification. Finally, the true believer, who has lived long enough in faith to have given time for experience, must have been so moved, by the ever brightening glimpses which his spirit has caught, of the world to come, as to feel the stirrings of an eager desire to see his Saviour face to face; and has therefore known Christ as "the hope of glory," formed in him, as the keeper of his soul unto eternal life. This brings us to a brief notice of the latter clause of our text, and of the temper of mind which prompted the apostle to utter the strong conviction which it embodies.

Being able to declare his knowledge of the Lord in whom he trusted, (a knowledge which was the fruit of long experience,) he was firmly persuaded that he should realize the full consummation of his hope, in the day of Christ's second glorious coming. He had so well proved Christ as his strength, as well as his righteousness and peace, that he has no doubts of final triumph, no shrinking from the last seal which he must put to his faith, the seal of martyrdom. He looks back upon a faithful ministry, and forward to a glorious crown. And he breaks out, as he takes this twofold view, in language of enviable confidence.—"I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the

faith : Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day : and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." "To all who love his appearing," will Christ give the crown of glory, which filled the enraptured vision of the apostle. God grant that we may all be entitled to claim an interest in this assurance. May we all have that true faith which consists in committing ourselves entirely to Christ, and which, by the full experience to which it leads, will enable us to say, each for himself, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day," when he shall come to gather his saints into his glorious kingdom. And why should not all who hear the glad tidings of redemption, enjoy this hope ? It is founded on a promise of God, made to all who will receive it. If you would have the proof of the power of faith, take the word of God on trust. Do what it requires of you as a test of faith, and you will soon have a clear witness that it is well founded. Prove God's word of promise, the remedy for your spiritual disease, as you would prove one prescribed for your bodily sufferings. Are you weak in faith now, you will soon be stronger. You may begin to take a medicine for the body on the testimony of others to its efficacy, with little hope of finding relief from the use of it. But if, day by day, you find yourself gaining in health and strength, you will soon become so convinced of the power of the tried remedy, as not only to continue its use, but likewise, to recommend it to others. So it will be with religious faith. The more constantly you apply to your own heart the proofs which the gospel offers you, the stronger will be your trust in the grace of the Saviour which it reveals.

Has God promised you salvation, on condition of repentance, and a true faith in Christ, that is a trust in his merits for pardon, and his grace for strength to lead a holy life ? And has he told you plainly what are the means of grace ? Then use those means. Make the trial. Do you believe that repentance is required ? Then show repentance. Is baptism commanded ? Receive it. Is the Lord's supper enjoined as a help to sustain faith, and strengthen your purposes of amendment ? Come to it, as a means of making you a better Christian. Try this promised help, and

see if you cannot appeal, by and by, to your own experience, for a proof of the efficacy of God's ordinances. Put the same kind of trust in the word of God, that you are wont to put in the word of honourable men. For such is the confidence of a lively faith in Christ. Let it be shown in all the modes of exercise of which you are capable, and you will, through life, be comforted by its sure testimony, in all time of sorrow; and at the hour of death, you will be cheered onward through the sorest trial of faith, to the state of full fruition, in which faith will be changed to sight.

SERMON XXXI.

“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”—REVELATION xxii. 17.

THE redemption of the world, through a divine Mediator, is represented in scripture under the most expressive imagery, adapted to man's nature. From the time when glimpses of the far distant advent of the Messiah, were caught by the prophet who chiefly spake of his glory, through the period of his ministry on earth, onward to the date of the revelation made to his beloved disciple John, in the Isle of Patmos, the blessings of his grace are set forth, as bread to the hungry, and water to the thirsty—bread and water so satisfying, that whosoever might eat and drink thereof should never hunger or thirst. The sufficiency and desirableness of the objects presented to the mind, are only equalled by the freeness with which they are offered—the urgency with which they are pressed. Whoever has felt the cravings of hunger, or the rage of thirst, especially when there was no reasonable hope of finding the means of appeasing these appetites, can appreciate the worth of food and drink, abundant and palatable, and the merciful kindness which freely provides them. And this we may say, though the relief afforded be momentary. How much more highly should both the sustenance itself, and the benevolence of the giver of it be valued, when the supply is so abundant that hunger and thirst shall return no more. Let them who know the comfort derived from the timely satisfying of the strong natural appetites, endeavour to form an adequate conception of the bliss set forth as “the bread and water of eternal life,” the grace which can satisfy the longings of the soul, hungering and thirsting after

righteousness and peace. Think of that emptiness of soul which is felt by one who has no hope of a state of happiness after death, or the feverish torment of one who is burning with the apprehension of a dreadful retribution for unexpiated sin, and you may be able to grasp the fulness of that divine assurance of our Saviour, "I am the bread of life. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever." "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life." Under the same figures, of sustenance and refreshment, is the blessedness of the Christian redemption exhibited, in the testimony of the angel, who declared to St. John "the revelation of the things that should come to pass" in the latter days of the mediatorial kingdom of Christ.

This angel was sent by Jesus, our ascended Lord, and the testimony which he gave was therefore the word of Jesus; by which word we are taught what God has done for us, and what he wills to do for us, as well as what we are required to do in order to secure the blessedness which he has in store for us. From him we learn the way of life eternal, and by him we are earnestly invited to enter it. If we turn to the record of his personal ministry, we find the page glistening with the tearful appeals of the Son of God, who came into the world to save that which was lost. His precious word is full of peaceful tidings, and of piteous entreaty; a rich mingling of oracle and prayer. And his chosen apostles, catching the spirit of his own mode of setting forth the dispensation of grace, exhaust the power of thought and utterance in their efforts to win benighted, besotted, and doomed sinners to a state of favour with God, of soberness and of divine illumination. But God, whose triune nature seeks to exhibit his grace in a triad of operations, appeals to sinful man, not only through the word of Christ, but also through the Holy Spirit, giving power to that word over the heart that he has opened to receive it, and through the church established and animated by that Spirit. The Spirit, whose office is to convince the world of sin, and to bring home to the soul of the convicted sinner the truth which saves, first shows the guilt of transgression, and the misery of lying under God's displeasure, and then displays the great atoning sacrifice, which gives comfort and peace; sets forth in a strong light the awful

majesty of God's law, and the deep tenderness of his love; and thus while it wields the rod of terror, opens the arms of mercy. Under this two-fold influence, moved by the quaking of fear and the melting of sorrow, the sinner, be he timid or bold, is swayed from his rebellious purposes into a state of subjection—is brought under a yoke which Christ calls "easy," and should be so, for it binds the soul to happiness forever.

The church puts on this yoke, imposing on the believer vows of obedience, according to the profession of faith, administering holy rites with their two-fold pledges—baptism, that sacred indenture between the Saviour and the saved, each to the other binding in perpetual covenant; and the supper of our Lord—that oft recurring feast of love, in which the faithful partakers, members of the mystical body of Christ, (like the parts of the broken loaf,) several, yet one, are nourished in unity and built up in godliness.

The church presents these bonds, (tender ties, though strong,) binding the soul in an embrace as sweet as it is lasting. The privileges are high as the duties—the tokens of favour are equal to the badges of subjection—the seals of grace as strong and sure as the claims of devotion. She has likewise a living ministry, with a divine commission to use these seals, to bring, within the peaceful fold of Christ, his wandering sheep, and there to certify them of his love, to pronounce absolution and remission of sins to the believing penitent, and to present at the throne of grace the incense of her prayers, for their godly nurture, their fulness of Christian growth. Thus by her ministry, proclaiming on Christ's authority the glad tidings of reconciliation with God, through faith in a crucified Saviour, and assuring to each repentant believer his full justification—celebrating the ordinances which are the seals of Christ's promises of pardon and grace, and as his ambassadors, beseeching men to accept the offered pardon and grace, as well as by all the privileges of adoption, into the state of sonship, whereby they become joint heirs with Christ of eternal glory—the church appeals to fallen, perishing souls, and bids them come to Christ.

To the triple voice of bidding just alluded to, reference is made in the chapter from which our text is taken. The word calls through the angel sent by Jesus. And, in our text, the Spirit and

the bride join in the earnest call. Now, "the bride" represents the church, whenever the expression occurs in the Book of Revelation; the connexion with Christ being as close as that of marriage, which is used by the sacred writers, as a type of it. The Spirit and the church, then, utter their united and urgent invitation to all who are not yet in the bonds of a saving faith, saying, "Come to the fountain of eternal life."

The church which Christ has established as the keeper and the witness of his word of truth; and the Spirit, which sends to the open heart the warm appeals of both the word and the church, set forth the blessedness of redemption, the joy and the triumph of faith, and urge every one who hears their gracious bidding to the banquet of life, to catch its sound, and echo it far and wide, that all may hear and accept it. "Let him that heareth, say, Come," with the hope that he who is athirst may come. This is, in few words, the meaning of our text. It opens to our view a scheme of salvation worthy of the deepest attention—a revelation from God, full of exceeding great and precious promises, whose fulfilment, sure as the being of the God who made them, will satisfy the highest longings of the soul. These promises embrace pardon to the guilty, light to the blind, strength to the weak, comfort to the afflicted, rest to the weary, and hope to the desponding. These gifts of grace afford but a feeble foretaste of the joys that will be the crown of enduring faith in another world. Of the excellence of these, an apostle has said, that "it has not entered into the heart of man to conceive." But the well-grounded hope of this fulness of bliss, without any of the actual experience of the promises during our life of trial, would be enough to prompt an earnest striving after it. It is the fruit of faith in the promises. All the peace and comfort, and joy and triumph, afforded by the redemption which Christ offers to mankind, are given to the believer in Christ, to him who comes to Christ in true faith. But how is he to come to Christ? When the Saviour was on earth, engaged in his personal ministry, they who would receive the benefits of his mediation could obey his call, and become his immediate followers; they could show their belief of his word, and their trust in his claims, by attaching themselves to his person. But where shall the sinner now find the Saviour?

Whence comes the invitation that fell from his lips so graciously among the Jewish multitude?

Brethren, the word still proclaims his offer of mercy. It is in the keeping of the church, and is quickened by the Spirit, which he sent to take his place and be with his disciples always. The Holy Spirit was sent by the risen and ascended Lord, to enable the apostles to establish and govern the church. And his gracious presence continually sustains her, in her fierce struggle with the powers that seek her overthrow. It sanctifies the water of baptism, making it fit for "the washing of regeneration," and the bread and wine of the eucharist, fitting them to represent and communicate mysteriously the body and blood of Christ. It gives power and unction to the Christian minister, making "the foolishness of preaching" (as the simple word of gospel truth is called,) the means of bringing into the church, and thus unto Christ, the wayward soul that had wandered into the wilderness of unbelief and sin. And it visits the heart of the sinner, quickening him with a sense of his condemnation and peril of everlasting death.

When the hearer of God's word feels its keen rebuke, when he writhes under the goading of conscience, showing him his own image in the flashing mirror of a truthful picture of sin, when he melts under the tender appeals of a dying Saviour's love, in the sad recital of his woes, when, under either impulse, he forms high and firm resolves of a sober, earnest, and perpetual self-dedication to the Lord, in the ordinance of the church—then is that sinful hearer moved by the Holy Spirit, and drawn towards Christ. But not into full connexion with him.—Not till those ordinances are received, does the penitent believer really become united to Christ. He is the Head of the church, which is his body; and by one Spirit, we, the members, are all baptized into one body. By baptism we are made members of Christ, and thenceforward, we receive nourishment and support from him. This nourishment is given in the holy sacrament of the supper,—that rich repast, in which the believer feeds on Christ by faith with thanksgiving. Thus, the Spirit calls into the church, those who are willing to receive salvation from Christ, and then unites with the church in an earnest offer of the blessings of salvation.

To you, my hearers, this call is often made: to you the Spirit

and the bride say, "Come, partake of the redemption which Christ has wrought." Have you heard this call, not with your outward ears merely, but in the chambers of a willing heart, and embraced it? If so, then take heed to the injunction which forms a part of our text, "Let him that heareth say, Come." Lift up your voice to those around you, and bid them become sharers of your joy. Bid them come to the church of Christ, for the gifts of his grace. And let the loud and clear note of an eager invitation, be accompanied with the still, small voice of a persuasive example; let the light of a holy life be a guiding beacon, and the clustering fruits of the Spirit be a strong and winning appeal. In this way, echo the divine call to which you have listened; and many may come at your bidding.

If you have not answered the triple voice that calls you to your own eternal blessedness, why do you not heed it? The whole gift of God's love is yours, if you will have it; his pardoning mercy and his sanctifying grace, the comfort of his continual presence to cheer the sorrows, and sustain the trials of life, the pledges of fellowship with his Son, and joint heirship of his glory, his light to guide, and his right arm to support, in the dark valley of the shadow of death; all this vastness and mystery of love is offered to all who feel their need of a Saviour, and who will receive him as he is offered. This is plainly declared. For the word says, "Let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."

Are you athirst for the water of eternal life? To you it is offered abundantly. Are you willing to come and receive it? To you it is offered freely.

The word of God is read and preached to you often. This call you must acknowledge. The ordinances of Christ are administered before your eyes, and commended to your regard. Thus, the church calls you to the privileges of Christian faith. And you must answer the question, whether the Spirit has made his appeals to your unyielding heart? You know, my hearers, if we do not, whether you have at any time been anxious about your soul's eternal peace,—have felt the rebukes of a roused conscience, enlightened by the word of God, and have been moved to ask, "What shall we do to be saved?" Have you not asked this question with much concern, when you saw others fleeing to the

church for refuge? Did you not make vows of repentance, pledge yourselves to a life of prayerful striving after holiness, with the diligent use of all the helps which were offered you? And have you now left off the search after godliness, the effort to become faithful followers of Jesus? Have you shut your ears to the Spirit's call—hardened your hearts against appeals? And why do you thus strive with God's messenger of peace? Is heaven less lovely, or hell less dreadful than it was? Or was there some master-passion that you could not conquer, some darling lust that you would fain spare, some wrong done to your fellow-men in matters of business, for which Christ demands restitution? And have you laboured to steel your heart against the convictions of God's Spirit, in order that you might enjoy sin unrebuked? If this be your case, hearer, you do surely rivet the chains which the devil has cast around you, and which, we fear, will bind you in eternal bondage. But, perhaps, it is only indifference that keeps you from answering the call which God's instruments are sounding in your ears. And why this apathy? You must settle the question of eternal life or endless misery before you die. When will you do it? Will you take the risk of dying in a state of doubt? Doubt will be damning, when evidence is clear—when light has been poured upon closed eyes. Apathy will be damning, when God has shown by multiplied proofs, the surpassing excellence of the salvation that he has provided and freely offered. Would that all were athirst for the water of life! Would that all were willing to come to the fountain of eternal life! Would that every sinner might eagerly listen to the word which declares the way of salvation, to the Spirit which shows man the need of it, and helps him to fulfil the conditions of it; and to the church which sets forth the seals and pledges of it.

To all who are yet strangers to the bliss of adoption into the Lord's family, and of the full enjoyment of its privileges, the bounteous grace of God in Christ Jesus is presented. It is a feast spread for the famished soul. It is a never-failing spring of living water for the thirsty soul. Come, then, to the feast bought by the blood of Christ. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." Let that Spirit "bear witness with your spirit," that you have obeyed his call, in your communion with the church, in the faithful use of her ordinances, in the full enjoyment of her privileges, and in

the practical godliness which she inculcates. And then, when her days of warfare are accomplished, and she appears as the New Jerusalem of the Apocalypse, highly adorned, and glorious in splendour, you will, if found faithful unto the end, be numbered among the bride's jewels, tried and proved by her heavenly Spouse. May God permit us all to reach this crown of glory, for the sake of his only Son our Lord.

SERMON XXXII.

“In this thing the Lord pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing.”—
2 KINGS V. 18.

NAAMAN the Syrian was an idolater and a leper. By a divine ordinance he was cured of both his leprosy and his idolatry. The means, when proposed to him, were scoffed at and despised: when tried in humble, simple faith, they were found effectual. The water of Jordan, although in itself no better than that of Abana or of Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, was blessed by the will and power of God, with a healing property which all Syria could neither imitate nor purchase.

The worshipper of Rimmon, seeing his flesh made clean as a healthy child's, by the seven-fold washing at the command of God's prophet, declares, with grateful warmth, “Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel.” How shall he further express his joy and thankfulness? The man of God must be rewarded. “I pray thee, take a blessing of thy servant,” was his appeal to Elisha. But God's prophets take no reward for dispensing his word and his grace. Elisha, though much urged, refused the proffered gift. But the devotion prompted by the miracle of which he was the conscious and happy subject, finds a ready issue, and seeks a full satisfaction. If the water, blessed by Israel's God, had such cleansing power, the earth also trod by his holy prophet, is the only fit altar for sacrifice to the true God. “And Naaman said, Shall there not, then, I pray thee, be given to thy servant two mules' burden of earth? for thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt-offering nor sacrifice

unto other gods, but unto the Lord." Behold the fervour of devotion—the ardent first love of the new convert! Lavish of vows, unsparing in exercises, exhaustless in raptures, jealous of the new-born piety, lest it should suffer disparagement, you see this healed leper and converted idolater, the type of many a Christian convert.

Healed and cleansed in body and soul, Naaman was, and wished to be still, captain of the hosts of the king of Syria. True as he believed the religion of Elisha to be, and eager as he was to worship Israel's God alone, he could not give up his post, so honourable and so lucrative. But to keep it, he must go through the forms and ceremonies of idolatry, and thus subject his profession of faith to suspicion. His king and master was an idolater, and he must be attended as usual, in the temple, as in the palace. As the king leaned on him, his own body must necessarily bow with the king's before the idol which he had cast away. It was an unwilling bending of the body—the heart was not in the service. He hoped that the Lord, who knoweth the heart, would forgive him, knowing that it was not worshipping the idol, but honouring his master. Hence he deprecates a misconstruction and censure of his conformity to the custom of his master, in the gestures of his body during the idolatrous service. "In this thing the Lord pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, when I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing."

We commend this passage of sacred history, so interesting in all its details, and so suggestive of practical reflections, to those who have been washed in the water of baptism, and cleansed from the foul leprosy of sin. How often do those who have professed, in the ordinances of Christ, that faith which bids the professor "not to be conformed to this world"—try to shelter themselves, when charged with unfaithfulness, under the shallow plea, that they only seem to be idolaters in reference to the authority of their masters. And who are these masters? Ungodly lust, unrighteous mammon, corrupt and fickle fashion. These conformers to this world would fain spare some favourite lust, keep back a part of what they had vowed to the Lord, or hold on with one hand to

the world which they have renounced, while they give the other in solemn pledge to their acknowledged Saviour. Christian brethren, we would speak to you briefly and plainly of worldly conformity in Christian professors. In so doing, we would set forth—1st. The mode of living to which the Christian profession binds the baptized believer; 2d. The injunctions of Holy Scripture based on the Christian covenant; 3d. The danger and evil consequences of a departure from the strict rule of holy living.

1st. In making an appeal to the members of the church in favour of religious strictness, or non-conformity to worldly maxims, habits, and indulgences, we would ask, as St. Paul asked the disciples of John whom he found at Ephesus, “Unto what then were ye baptized?” Members of the church of Christ, “Unto what were ye baptized?” What are the privileges and the duties involved in your baptism? You have been brought, like Naaman, full of leprosy, and washed in water, sanctified by the Holy Ghost, to the mystical washing away of sin. You have received Christ’s pledge of pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace, of adoption to that spiritual sonship by which you became children of God, members of Christ, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven—the blessedness of a share in the glory of your Lord, when he shall have finished his mediatorial work. This pledge is given in exchange for your own promise of faith in his word, repentance for your sins past, and obedience to his will and commandments all the days of your life. You have solemnly vowed to renounce the devil and all his works, “the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the sinful desires of the flesh.” Do you think that Christ is bound by his pledge, while you are released from yours? Or do you deem one portion of the vow less binding than the other? Is the renouncing of the devil and his works a solemn vow, binding the soul forever, while an equally plain and positive renouncing of the vain pomp and glory of the world, may be viewed as a phrase of no meaning? Is it not indeed the strongest bond of the covenant? The baptized person renounces the devil and all his works. These works are many—more than are usually admitted by Christians. It is hard to tell how many of the things, usually classed as the pomps and vanities of the world, may properly be brought within this category.

But see the strength of the baptismal vow in the case of

worldly conformity. Not merely the things themselves are therein and thereby renounced, but likewise "all covetous desires of the same." And what gives covetous desires for unlawful pleasures, but habitual mingling with those who indulge in them, and habitual exposure to evil communications. Be assured, brethren, that the froth and foam of worldliness—the turbid streams of fashionable ungodliness, can never efface the mark, though made with pure water, with which the child of God was impressed at the holy font. Water indeed it was, but hallowed by the blood which, mixed with water from a Saviour's side, marked a death of sacrifice.

"What sparkles in that lucid flood,
Is water by gross mortals eyed,
But seen by faith 'tis blood
Out of a dear friend's side."

That blood is at once the pledge of our salvation and of our devotion. But the vows written in it seem to have been written in sand, so easily do the floods of ungodliness and irreligion wash them away. A distinguished orator of the last century gave currency and celebrity to the false maxim, that "vice loses half its evil by losing all its grossness." We have only to view it in connexion with the Christian profession to see clearly its fallacious character. Non-conformity with the world, which is the Christian's avowed and commanded duty, requires him to keep on one side of a line, to be drawn honestly and fairly by the church.

And the nearer the world is brought to the church by the purifying, ennobling, and assimilating power of diffused Christian truth, the stricter must be the rule of requirement which would mark the distinction.

At the same time the tendency of the power of habit, the sanction of numbers, and the influence of example, being in favour of a lowering of the standard of Christian duty, and of promoting a false liberality towards the things which savour of iniquity and irreligion, Christians are tempted beyond the line, into scenes of mischievous worldliness, where the seductiveness of vice is increased by the want of that grossness which would have made it revolting.

A late eminent bishop has said, when pressing the duty of not

being conformed to this world, that "when the Apostle Paul wrote his Epistle to the Romans, the Christian convert had but to look around him and in the revolting obscenity of heathen manners, to mark out distinctly that world to which he must not be conformed." But could the heathen world before Christ, or can the heathen world now, furnish much more indecent and corrupting indulgences than the ball-room and theatre exhibit? And do not professing Christians countenance these mischievous dissipations by their presence, and by allowing their baptized children to partake of them? And might not the apostle now warn converts with the same earnestness which he expressed in his epistles, against "revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries?" All these indulgences in worldly conformity, you should abstain from, Christian brethren, "Seeing ye have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." "Buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even we also should walk in newness of life." Well, therefore, may the apostle exhort believers in these touching words: "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

A candid and hearty response to the earnest question, "Unto what were ye baptized?" will open a clear path for the Christian in the way of godliness. For the church, in strict conformity with Holy Scripture, declares that "baptism doth represent unto us our profession, which is, to follow the example of our Saviour, Christ, and to be made like unto him; that as he died and rose again for us, so should we who are baptized, die from sin, and rise again unto righteousness." The very token, then, of grace given, is a pledge on our part of grace cherished and diligently cultivated. The sign and seal of pardoning mercy is not clearer or stronger than the vow of devotion. And how nearly soever the world and the church may be brought together, there is a dividing line which the Christian must recognise, and not presume to cross.

We say then, distinctly, that the church relaxes nothing of the strict Christian rule of living, but imposes a solemn vow of such

living, on every one to whom she offers the pledge of salvation in our Lord Jesus Christ. All her offices, from the font to the tomb, enforce the need, while they recognise the means of true holiness. On Holy Scripture she rests her claims, and to it she appeals for the sanction of her order and her teachings. Let us see, then, the earnest injunction of scripture on the subject of consistent profession.

2dly. "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind," says St. Paul to the Romans. Here is the inspired wisdom of counsel, which calls up to view both the graces which help, and the zealous co-working of the adopted in effecting that change of character which marks the true Christian.

The first part of the injunction, "Be not conformed to this world," cannot well be mistaken. The phrase, "this world," and the like one, "the world," when used in connexion with religion, by way of contrast, either in reference to its hopes or its duties, cannot be misunderstood. It must surely mean, whatever, either in the nature of the employment, or indulgence, or the degree of it, is inconsistent with the avowed principles of Christian faith, or Christian duty. "Be not conformed to this world," then, is an injunction which, standing alone, unexplained by the context, bids the baptized believer avoid that excessive devotion to the business of life, which marks the character of those who recognise no Christian obligations, to "that covetousness which is idolatry," and which eats into the soul, as well as commingling with the irreligious in those pleasures, which the candid among them admit belong exclusively to themselves. They that will be rich in this world's goods, reckless of the claims of the real Giver of those very goods, as fully and fatally, perhaps, violate the spirit of that injunction, as they who indulge freely in the dissipations so eagerly coveted by those who mock at religion, and give God no praise, even for the strength and the appetite which afford voluptuousness its satisfying exercise.

To the Christian, then, there is a prescribed limit to the degree of zeal, in even the honest pursuit of gain, as well as to a participation in sensual excesses, however disguised by a false and accommodating nomenclature. Holy Scripture, pointing plainly to a line of demarkation, which conscious sincerity with ordinary

intelligence, can readily trace, says to every professor of faith in Christ's pardoning love and mercy, "thus far shalt thou go and no further; pass not this boundary, lest you peril your soul's salvation." "Come out, my people, and be ye separate," says the Lord to his adopted children. "Love not the world, neither the things of the world." "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." "What concord hath Christ with Belial?" "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts."

Here are a few of the many texts, which memory supplies, setting forth the rule of practical illustration required by the Christian profession. When, therefore, we thus appeal to Scripture, as expressing the teaching of the church, we mean to show that the church, if deemed too strict by her loose living members, does not make the strictness which she imposes; and if charged with laxity by those who are without her pale, must be content to share the reproach with the oracles of God. She does not go beyond the word of God; nor need she do so. And we have yet to learn from friend or foe, that she falls short of it, in her requirements of personal holiness. Is the church not faithful to her high trust, when she imposes a vow at baptism, "to renounce not only the devil and all his works, but likewise, the pomp and vanities of this wicked world, with all covetous desires of the same?" And is the baptized person faithful, if he does not recognise in this latter clause of the renouncing vow, something different from positive wickedness, and yet inconsistent with a truly religious life?

Will the honest believer, then, undertake to justify, or palliate the worldly conformity intended by the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, "on the ground that they are not positively wicked?" If they were, they would be renounced as such. But, Christian professor, you have renounced these, besides the devil and all his works. Perhaps we do not give the devil his due, when we leave out of the list of his works, some of the fashionable kinds of dissipation, in which professing Christians often indulge. But we put the conformers to this world on one of the horns of the dilemma, the double vow of renunciation.

3d. Let us now consider the danger of such departure from the

strict rule of Christian living. Danger there truly is to the piety and spiritual health of professing Christians in worldly conformity. They cannot mingle in scenes of riot or profanity, or circles of reckless dissipation, with those who make life a merry dance, without losing that serious thought of their responsibility and their destiny, which becomes their avowed relation to Christ, their Saviour and their Judge.

Say, if you will, that you are mere lookers on, that your heart is not in the play, or the dance, so often indecent and corrupting—that in the temple of idolatry, you only bend in seeming worship with the master who leans on your arm—the outward conformity will soon fix a habit of association, which will induce a forgetfulness of the vow made to the true God.

But what have you to do with the house of Rimmon, or any other heathen temple, when you have been sealed as one of the spiritual Israel, and have avouched the Lord to be your God? If any earthly tie draw you into dangerous contact with insnaring pleasures, break the tie, or disown its authority. You cannot serve two masters—ye cannot serve God and mammon! We warn all, therefore, of the danger of evil communications. Indiscreet intercourse with those who are given to worldliness, and close participation with them in pleasures which are chiefly coveted by such, may and will weaken religious principle, and bring a spiritual declension.

Will you, then, fellow-Christians, who find the exercises of devotion, often engaged in, barely sufficient to keep up within you spiritual life, in a healthy and vigorous state, dare hope to maintain your steadfastness in the midst of the gay and the giddy—in the whirl of fashionable follies?

Will you trust a languishing piety to the keeping of those who worship only ungodliness? Is it in the ball-room that you are to learn so to number your days, as to apply your hearts unto wisdom? Is it there, in the unscrupulous indulgence of the freedom of inordinate desires, that you expect to show how resolutely you can “renounce the pomps and vanities of this wicked world?” Is it thus that the Christian declares his “steadfast purpose to lead a godly life?” Some may excuse themselves with the plea, that they desire to make religion appear cheerful and inviting. Vain plea! The votaries of wicked pleasure and irre-

ligion will not care to come to you, professing Christians, so long as you are so ready to go to them. And the more you lower the standard of religion, the less value will it have in their estimation, when they have seen the vanity of worldliness. Have a care, then, lest, while you only put a great hinderance in the way of others, you bring fatal damage to your own soul. That soul, although Christ's by redemption and dedication, is yours for keeping, and yours for judgment. Take heed that you diligently keep it, so that judgment may not be condemnation.

You may apply a sure test to any employment or indulgence in order to determine its character. Is it of God, or of the world? Can you ask God's blessing upon it? If in the midst of it you should be summoned to a bed of sickness, could you say, in pious submission, "Thy will, O God, be done!" Could you there invoke the strengthening help, and comforting grace of the Holy Spirit? Yea, if the sudden and startling call to leave this world ring through the soul, in the words of a merciful Saviour, and a just Judge, "Behold, I come quickly," would the firm and cheerful answer be, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Take these thoughts with you in your works and your recreations. Regard yourselves as conscious partakers of an inheritance of bliss, whose final enjoyment depends on your own faithfulness to keep your vows of self-devotion and self-discipline. Remember, that as you sow, you will surely reap, that "he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Consider that our upward flight requires the overcoming of the gravitating tendency of our fallen nature, while the descent from any attained height of spiritual advancement, is made more easy and rapid by the same continual force.

Growth in grace, which is the only sure sign, not only of health, but of safety, demands diligent culture, careful tilling with the refreshing dews and showers bestowed by the Holy Spirit. These you must seek where they may be found,—not in the haunts of vice, or scenes of mad revelry, not in bewitching, soul-insnaring devices of ungodly fashion,—not within the precincts of corruption and immorality—but in the honest walks of well-regulated industry—in the sober meditations of the closet—the cheerful contentment of domestic duty, and refined social inter-

course. In these the Holy Spirit will not desert you,—and from these you may go, with hope of richer flowings of grace to the sanctuary of the Lord, where his holy word giveth light to the simple, and his precious body and blood become the satisfying food and nourishment of the soul. So live in the exercise of godliness, that you may find on earth the sober joy, which is the true antepast of the crowning bliss of the redeemed in Christ's heavenly kingdom.

SERMON XXXIII.

“If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridled not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain.”—JAMES i. 26.

It is a wise maxim, and one which is fully recognised by the gospel of Jesus Christ, that “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” And as the word of God is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart, laying bare the secret motives and hidden springs of action, to bring them into judgment, words are as much subject to condemnation as deeds. Such seems to be the doctrine of Jesus when he says to the Jews, that “every idle word that men speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.” And this is only carrying out the principle that true religion is seated in the heart. “A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is good, and an evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is evil.” “Out of the heart proceed all evil thoughts.” Hence it becomes a fair test of the religious character of any person, according to the maxim of our Saviour already quoted, what is the spirit of conversation, and what is the control of that unruly member, the tongue, which such person habitually displays; for, however religious any man may seem to be in all other matters, yet, if he does not bridle his tongue, and bring it into subjection to the rule of the gospel, that man’s religion is vain: he deceiveth his own heart with the show of religion.

“The powers of speech,” says one who knew well the proper use of her own, “are among the most important committed to our

charge; and as capable as any other of a right or a wrong cultivation; there is this only difference, that while other powers lie dormant from neglect, these will be in action whether cultivated or not, and if we do not direct them to the right, will most certainly expend themselves on the wrong."

The truth of this general remark will hardly be disputed. It may be followed by another more nearly connected with the matter of our text, that it is often found much easier to control the appetites, and refrain from doing wrong, than to restrain the tongue within the bounds of sobriety and peace. Even professing Christians fail in this respect, when they have succeeded in establishing their religious character in all other points; and he must be a meeker man than Moses, who has never "spoken unadvisedly with his lips." Indeed the apostle regards it as the perfection of the religious character, to be able to govern the tongue so as to commit no offence. "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body." For every kind of beasts and of birds and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind; but the tongue can no man tame."

This notion of the difficulty of refraining the lips from evil, and subjecting the speech to the rule of Christian morality, while it should serve to make us patient under any wholesome correction,—ought not be an encouragement to license; it should rather excite shame and a diligent effort to overcome the evil, which is so prevalent and seemingly incorrigible. For, what is the state of the case?—Every wild beast of whatever nature, has been subdued by the reason, skill and courage of man; and the mischief which might have been caused by them, is in some measure prevented. But the tongue, which, in its proper employment, should only show forth the glory of God, and be made subservient to the best interests of society, is suffered to be "an unruly evil, full of deadly poison."

No way could ever be found to subdue the tongue, or to prevent the wicked from corrupting the principles, polluting the imaginations, and inflaming the passions by their mischievous discourse. Men will slander and revile each other, and will not set a watch upon their lips, that they speak no evil. Ah! here is a glancing at the remedy for the evil. The apostle speaks of the want of power

in man to curb the tongue. The natural powers which give him the mastery of the beasts of the forest, are foiled here. How strongly he intimates the need of the grace of God, causing the constant watch over the lips, and keeping it. As David prayed that God would set a watch upon his lips, so must the Christian always seek the same divine aid in his efforts to curb an unruly member.

We propose to consider, at this time, evil speaking—its prevalence and various modes; and the most effectual check to it.

Evil speaking, which of course includes what is generally called scandal, as well as slander, is a fault which pervades every class of society, high and low, fashionable and polite, sedate and religious. Go where you may, you will hardly escape its varied tones—"their sound has gone out into all the earth."

You may as well pillow your head upon the ocean's rock and say you will not hear its surges, as seek to escape from the voice of evil speaking. It admits of great variety of shade and feature, and of every degree of guilt, from the idle word which is uttered in self-indulgence, reckless of the wound it may cause, to the deliberate and malicious insinuation which stabs the fair fame of an enemy or a rival. In some classes of society it partakes of the frivolous character of the pursuits and occupations of the circle, and turns upon persons, fortunes and connexions, doing little injury, perhaps, and only to be deprecated as an abuse of one of the gifts of God, which might and should be used for the well-being of society. But in a more rational society, as if, the better the soil the ranker the weed, evil speaking assumes a more dangerous character. There the conduct and reputation of individuals are made the objects of attack. Not only are faults eagerly exposed, but thoughts, motives and feelings ascribed, when only the mere acts could be known.

How many a fatal stab has been given to the character of the innocent by a sly innuendo, or a malicious and significant question! What a world of meaning lies in an ominous "But!" How much wide-spreading mischief lurks in the emphatic "*They say*"—which belongs to every body and can be traced to nobody! These and various other words of disparaging others, or of giving them pain, are so many instances of evil speaking. Such wantonness, although there may be no falsehood, and no violation of confi-

dence—although nothing be said but what is believed to be true, is nevertheless, a breach of that charity which “thinketh no evil,” and tends to loosen the bonds of society, by exciting distrust, jealousy and suspicion, and imbittering the feelings of those who should dwell together in unity.

It may be said in justification of some sorts of evil speaking, that “there can be no harm in saying what we know to be true.” But how little of what we say, do we know, or can we know, to be true? And how seldom do we stop at the precise point where knowledge ends, and conjecture begins? Examine yourselves, brethren, and see how often you ascribe thoughts and impute motives, to others, when you only undertake to relate mere facts—to declare what was said or done! You may know the fact, but when you presume to read the motives which led to it, you pass the bounds of knowledge, and usurp the prerogative of Him who alone knoweth the heart, and who has said, “Judge not, that ye be not judged.”

Any imputation of bad motives—any suspicion cast upon the honesty and sincerity of those of whom you speak, subjects you to the charge of evil speaking, in its most common form. A sneer, or a shaft of ridicule may hurt the character of the absent, in the estimation of a large circle of acquaintances, by whom they had been counted worthy of respect and honour. And whether this be an expression of malice, or of a reckless and wanton humour, it is in either case evil speaking. There are cases where ill nature, a deliberate desire of giving pain, an envious wish to depreciate what cannot be reached, vents itself in bitter and indiscriminate sarcasm. Such persons as have this feature of character are very Ishmaels, and must be left to the special grace of God, which alone can mend them.

There are others who cultivate this talent, (which they take to be wit, but mistake the quality thereof) from a desire to shine and attract notice in company. Of these it may be remarked, that if they like the world’s laugh, better than its love, (they cannot have both) they must take their choice. But if they have any consciousness of accountability for the proper use of speech, they must stand convicted of what the Scriptures designate as evil speaking. There are some, however, who indulge in sarcasm habitually, not from malice, for they seem to be kind and amiable, and even gene-

rous in character, nor from a desire to be notorious. They seem rather to be subject to a settled habit of saying smart and severe things, which they indulge, without reflecting upon its consequences, or have indulged so long that they are unable now to restrain it. This class of persons should consider the mischief which the indulgence of such a humour may cause; and remember that, although they do not mean to offend, "for every idle word which they utter, they will be called to give an account." Idle words are those which are spoken without regard to consequences. And the class of persons just referred to, come within the application of this warning of our Saviour's.

Let them take heed to it, and learn not to scatter fire-brands in mere sport, lest they be held accountable for a world of mischief of which they never dreamed. We have glanced at some of the habits and modes of evil speaking. You have heard how widely the corruption has spread; and have doubtless observed it in its various forms. Avoid it, as you would the pestilence. Go not near it, for "Evil communications corrupt good manners." But can you avoid going near it? Does it not show itself in every kind of society? Are any exempt from it? Does it not enter within the pale of the church, and infuse its poison into the society of the faithful in Christ Jesus?

Is there a social circle, whose bond of union is the professed love of Christ, and whose object is the promotion of his cause, where this evil does not intrude? Is it possible that the noxious weed can flourish in such a soil? "Alas!" says a female writer, "it is here it has its most bitter—its most cruel growth. The sinner whom God spares, and waits for, a fellow sinner scoffs at and despises. The stain that Jesus washes with his tears, a fellow sinner eagerly exposes: the penitent bosom that Heaven has comforted, has every wound made to bleed afresh by the taunts, and whispers of his fellow-men. It is good for Christians to confess their faults to one another; or rather it would be good, if there were not danger of their becoming reconciled to what they are so familiar with; but it is very unprofitable to dwell much upon the faults of others, and to make that prominent, which had better be concealed from public gaze. And is it not true that the tongue is an "unruly evil," in the midst of that company, where it should be employed in the service of God, and in adorning the doctrine of Christ? And is it not a reproach to the cause of

Christ that it is so? In the wide wilderness of the world, where religion cannot grow, we may expect thorns and briars, and all noxious weeds; but in the vineyard of the Lord, which he has fenced in and cultivated with great care, (for what could have been done more for his vineyard, that he has not done,) we may well be alarmed, if we find poisonous thistles growing rank, and wounding us at every step. The bright sun of gospel truth shines on it; the Holy Spirit, like the dew of Hermon, sheds its refreshing and invigorating influence on it, the most precious promises and the sweetest hopes are spread abroad in it, and yet sin is left to flourish there unchecked.

Shall the religion of Christ put no stop to the sin of evil speaking? Are its precepts of no force; its examples nothing; its obligations powerless; its hopes unavailing? But it is expressly forbidden by the Holy Scripture. And it is likewise a proof of the want of that true charity, which is the bond of perfectness, and "which thinketh no evil." Here, then, is the root of the evil, and here the remedy must be applied. They who think no evil, will say none.

Cultivate that Christian charity, which will lead you to think as well as possible of your neighbours. Let it be your care so to bridle your tongue as never to speak without a motive, and let that motive be a good one. For the idle word often does as much mischief as the malicious one. If you have an ox that is wont to gore your neighbour's, or your neighbour himself, is it not a moral duty to shut him up? And is not the tongue to be thus restrained? If it is prone to do mischief when it goes at large, you cannot be without guilt, if you do not shut it up. Such an appeal may be made to you as moral beings. As such you should consider whether a word spoken may not wound the character, or mar the peace of a fellow-being. But as Christians, who have professed to believe in the Saviour, and to follow in his steps, let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ. "Let your speech be always with grace." These are apostolic maxims. But professing Christians seem not to heed them. Evil speaking abounds.

And it is not a mere partisan warfare between different folds. It prevails in the midst of a common fold, where there should be a constant endeavour, as there is a strong and constantly appealing motive, for unity and harmony. We do not know that there is,

in our own parish, a larger measure of this evil than can be found elsewhere. Doubtless we have more than we should have. We know that there is a sad want of that close intercourse and brotherly love, which should characterize those who are fellow members of the church of Christ. And when these members come together, as they sometimes do, to make an effort to promote the common good, the stiffness of ceremony is allowed to take the place of warm and affectionate greeting between co-workers in a cause which should draw hearts together in a holy and enduring bond.

The Redeemer's kingdom will not, cannot, be established in the world by cold and feeble efforts. Neither the church universal, nor the church within the bounds of a parish, can be much helped by forces which neutralize or repel each other. The cause demands that all should work together as the members of one body. The root of the evil complained of is the want of a proper appreciation of the common bond which binds the members of the church together, and to Christ their common Head. True church principles will be likely to produce warm church feeling. They who know what it is to be "one in Christ," will soon learn to cherish a feeling of fellowship one with another. It is a holy brotherhood into which Christ brings the joint partakers of his covenant privileges. And it will be strange if they who strive to keep his commandment, to love one another as he loved them all, should speak ill of each other. Love worketh no ill, and love, therefore, is the fulfilling of the law. Let all who profess to be the followers of Christ in the bond of church fellowship, remember that being "members of Christ," they are members one of another. The church is the body of Christ; and he, the Head, suffers with every member of that body.

Let this assurance, while it causes you to appreciate the privilege of membership, prompt you to a careful discharge of all the obligations of it. Whatsoever you do, in word or in deed, do all to the glory of God. Let the words of your mouth, and the meditations of your heart, be always acceptable unto him who is your strength and your Redeemer. Let all your doings show forth his praise on earth, that you may be confessed by him at the final judgment, as sons of God, and joint heirs with Christ of eternal glory. And that this may be the happy lot of us all, may God grant, for Christ's sake.

SERMON XXXIV.

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.”—JOHN iii. 14, 15.

THE glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is set forth so distinctly in the scriptures of the New Testament, derives much of its illustration from the books of Moses, the mediator of the old covenant, which contained the types and figures of a better dispensation. The revealings of divine mercy and grace, which bursting suddenly upon the darkened mind of fallen man, would have been too bright for discernment, were by a softened light, adapted to his spiritual vision.

Well, therefore, is the law called by the apostle of Christ, “the shadow of good things to come.” And so clear are its significant pointings to the redemption in whose accomplishment we can rejoice, that it is aptly designated as our schoolmaster, to bring us to Christ. We may, therefore, safely resort to its teachings, for helps to a proper understanding of the grand scheme of salvation through the mediation of Jesus. Yet we need much caution in the use which we make of a typical dispensation, lest we give substance to shadows, and found doctrinal conclusions upon a basis that will not sustain them. There are many things that are regarded as types, which have no existence as such, except in the minds of fanciful expositors. Undiscerning writers have thrown over the Mosaic record, a web of nice invention, in which gospel truths are made to stand out in thick profusion, so as to startle the credulous, and excite the scoffings of the skeptical. But although some things have been thus elevated into types, by the mere force of a buoyant imagination, there are in the same

scriptures such clear prefigurations of the Christian system of doctrines and ordinances, as must be considered divinely appointed types.

The passage which we have quoted from St. John, refers to one of this character, of whose genuineness there can be no reasonable doubt. Indeed, so fit an illustration of the efficacy of faith in a crucified Saviour, does the symbol alluded to afford, that we might readily and confidently apply it, even if we had no inspired testimony to guide us. But we have our Lord's own assurance of its full significancy, as a type of himself, in his character as a universal propitiation for sin. The symbol to which he refers is doubtless very familiar to all of you; the brazen serpent which Moses made at the command of God, to be the means of healing the wounds of his rebellious people, whom he had scourged for their disobedience. The historical incident, of which so much use may be made by the Christian expositor, is found recorded in the twenty-first chapter of Numbers, (fifth to ninth verse,) and is substantially as follows:—The children of Israel, discouraged by their long and toilsome journey in the wilderness, murmured against the Lord, and against his servant Moses, for bringing them out of Egypt to perish in the wilderness. To punish their refractory spirit, the Lord sent venomous serpents, called “fiery,” to bite and destroy them. After many of the people had died of the poisonous bite of these reptiles, Moses was besought, by the penitent sufferers, to pray unto God, that he would take away the serpents. God hearkened unto Moses, and ordained a remedy for the wounds, that would else have been fatal. He commanded Moses to make a brazen image of a serpent, and set it up on a pole, that all who were bitten, might look on it and live. “And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole: and it came to pass that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.”

Now this symbol has been generally and very truly regarded as a type of Christ crucified, a clear sign of the salvation that should be the believer's heritage under the Christian dispensation. Our Lord says plainly, that just as Moses lifted the serpent in the wilderness, and there was no other lifting up than that we just considered; “even so, must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but should have

eternal life." By the lifting up of the Son of man, he evidently meant his own crucifixion; as St. John in another place testifies, in these words:—"This he said, signifying what death he should die." We may, therefore, regard the text as setting forth the necessity of Christ's crucifixion, in order that mankind might be redeemed from the state of spiritual condemnation, which leads to eternal death; and of faith in its efficacy, in order to entitle each individual to its benefits. We, therefore, hold up to your view, this clear type of the great propitiatory sacrifice, and bid you look at its strong points of application.

And, first, observe, that the wounds inflicted by the serpents were fatal, if left to take their course. Here we have a fit representation of the deadly nature of sin. Inborn corruption, which seated in the heart, spreads o'er the whole man, breaking out in deformities of character, which mark the guilty for final ruin, may be well likened to the venom of the serpent's tooth, which rankles in the wound, tainting the blood, and poisoning the fountain of life. Mark the progress of subtle poison in its work of death. The victim of its insidious power feels a sudden pang, which marks the recent wound, and, perhaps, eagerly looks for a remedy. But while he seeks, or before he can apply that which is close at hand, the pain which alarmed him has ceased, and all apprehension of danger is allayed. But the poison is working within him, and by its chilling influence lulls the senses into drowsiness and torpor, and the livid body gives at once a dreadful warning of danger, and a sure indication of approaching death. It is thus that sin works corruption and death in the soul of man. The first appearance of guilt wounds the conscience, yet sensitive and vigilant, and a sudden effort is made to cast out the painful thing—to free the soul from the smart of the wound. But the struggle is a short one; conscience soon becomes easy under the stroke—all seems fair and calm—a drowsiness steals over the moral sense; a fatal torpor ensues; and the soul is fast bound in the sleep of death, ere its danger could be apprehended. Such is the sure, but often slow and concealed decay of the soul, into which that old serpent the devil has struck his fangs. And man cannot watch too closely the signs of spiritual death; or too soon apply that unfailing remedy, which God has in mercy provided.

This remedy may be seen illustrated by its type; for we remark, as another point to be made in the parallel which we would draw, that, as the wounds of the Israelites were fatal, unless the remedy provided by divine interposition were applied, so was that remedy effectual and certain. In whatever stage of the disease it was applied, it afforded instant relief. The sufferer had but to lift his eyes, and gaze trustingly at the brazen image, which was raised on high by the Lord's mediator, and the progress of the destroying malady was stayed.

The act of looking up to the healing standard, was an expression of faith in God's power and providence. And it represents to us faith in the great propitiation for the sins of the world, the Son of God, who was lifted up on the cross, that all the wounded and perishing souls of Adam's fallen race, might, with a penitent and trusting spirit, look on him, and live forever. And the divinely bestowed remedy was as wide as the disease for which it was prescribed. There was no limitation to its power. The brazen serpent which Moses raised on high, was placed in full view of all the Israelites, so that every one who had need of its healing power, could avail himself of it. The wounded were only required to show their trust in the God whose protecting arm had led them thus far through the wilderness, by receiving the declared means of recovery—the appointed mode of cure, that God might be honoured by his stricken people.

How fitly does this represent the universality of the divine redemption, through a Mediator appointed by God, for the recovery of all his lost creatures! For, these two points should both be well considered—namely, that salvation is not restricted, in its operation, by any divine decrees; but is free to all, who, feeling their need of it, will receive it as it is offered. And the efficacy of Christ's mediatorial sacrifice, is derived from a divine appointment. There was nothing in the brazen image of the serpent which, of itself, had power to heal. There was no peculiar fitness in the symbol chosen, to make it the necessary medium of sanatory influence. It was the power of God which effected the cure, making that effectual by his will and appointment, which of itself had no special adaptation to the case of the afflicted Israelites. So it is with respect to the atoning power of the sacrifice of Christ. There was no natural and necessary relation between

his precious sacrifice, and the delivery of man from the fatal consequences of sin. It was a moral relation founded on the will of God, who ordained that vicarious offering, and the good pleasure of God who accepted it, as one full and perfect satisfaction for the sins of the world.

We dare not say that there was no other way in which God could have reconciled justice and holiness, with mercy to the fallen, than by the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. Nor, if we dared, should we deem it expedient or profitable to speculate on what He might have done. It is enough for us to know, and to declare to you, as the children of wrath by nature—born to a heritage of woe, that there is no other revealed way of salvation, than that which God has appointed and proclaimed,—namely, faith in a crucified Saviour. Let these two statements of doctrine be carefully weighed.

1st. That there is no limitation of the benefits of the redemption wrought by Christ, to the favoured subjects of unconditional election. They are open to all, who, feeling their need of them, will receive them as they are offered, on the terms of repentance and faith. In the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, “there is a fountain filled with blood,” whose abundant issues flow wherever sin has left its stain of corruption, cleansing freely and wholly, and having no barrier but unbelief. And this precious unlimited redemption is such by God’s own appointment, who has declared that, without shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins.

The second proposition that we make is, that we recognise the ordaining power of God in the efficacy of the atonement made by Christ. The same glorious Being, who, in the prophecies of holy men of old, was set forth as the future Messiah, was in the fulness of time, declared to be the Son of God, by the power of a resurrection from a death voluntarily undergone for the redemption of perishing sinners.

Pause not to inquire, then, into the fitness of the declared offering for sin. It is enough for a fallen and doomed creature to know assuredly that God has set forth Christ Jesus to be a propitiation for sin, through whom, by the means of a living faith, salvation may be freely received.

And think not to obtain salvation in any other way than that which God has appointed. “For there is none other name under

heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved," than that of Jesus Christ our Lord. In his name, through faith in him, all men may be saved from sin and death, and become heirs of eternal life. The only limit to the extent of the power of this one, complete, and general redemption consists in the necessity of a personal application of its benefits, to the soul of every penitent believer.

Look then, once more, to the symbol of Christian redemption, presented in our text. The lifting up of the serpent in the wilderness was not of itself, and directly, the cause of recovery to all the wounded Israelites. But if any were not sensible of their wounds, or through a stiff-necked opposition to the will of God, or doubt of his kind providence, neglected to avail themselves of the offered remedy, by the significant act of faith—looking up to the brazen image,—they were suffered to perish. It was not enough that God had ordained that mode of deliverance, or that Moses had obediently placed the symbol within reach of the wounded—those only were healed who complied with the conditions prescribed.

So it is with the true antitype; redemption through a crucified Saviour. It is not enough that God has ordained the salvation of man through the blood of propitiation, or that he who was in the beginning set forth as the Saviour was in due time, "by wicked hands crucified and slain;" the sinner must look upon him in faith, as his only Saviour, or he will perish in his sins.

Ah, here is where many stumble, and fall into hopeless ruin. They hear of universal redemption, and they fondly fancy that this means salvation, secured to all by the merits of Christ, whether they will acknowledge him by a true and lively faith, or not. They vainly muse upon a divine work of atonement, as if, because they have no instrumentality in the performance of it, they have nothing to do in the making of it personally beneficial. But what a fatal mistake. Man cannot, and could not ever devise a plan of salvation; could never open for himself the gate of heaven, which he closed against himself. This it behooves all men seriously to consider and humbly to acknowledge. But what will it profit an exiled sinner, that the gate of heaven is opened by an all-prevailing Mediator, if it be not entered? In vain is the glorious city of our God spread out in its splendour and spaciousness

of mansions, with all barriers removed, if the guilty sons of men turn their back upon so goodly a heritage, or plant their feet before it, in obstinate rejection or proud contempt of its blessings. Greater is their condemnation that so much light has been given them, but they have preferred darkness rather than light, (because their deeds are evil; and they love to have it so.)

Let Christ's solemn assurance be deeply pondered, and the important inference be laid to heart, by all who hear:—"The Son of man must be lifted up—like the serpent in the wilderness—that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." If, then, Christ must be crucified for the salvation of all who believe in him, it must follow, that they who will not believe in him cannot be saved by this redemption. But they can be saved by no other; for there is no other. How, then, shall ye escape, if ye neglect so great salvation? Will you cling to the hope of mercy uncovenanted, when you have rejected that which is covenanted? Will you trust to God's love and goodness, when you have done despite to his grace so wondrous and free, in the offered mediation of his beloved Son? Vain delusion! The true and only hope of man, rests in a steadfast looking to that consecrated body, in which the Godhead was manifested, as it was lifted up on the cross of Calvary; placed between earth and heaven; connecting them through man's reconciliation. There, at the foot of the cross, (an unseemly altar, as some might think, for the sacrifice of the precious Lamb of God,) let the penitent sinner point to the water and the blood, the double witness of a real sacrifice, and call on the Lord for his unspeakable gift.

Let the prostrate soul, reaching upward in earnest seeking of a personal interest in Christ, embody its deep sighings in the language of the sacred hymn:—

"Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From thy side a healing flood;
Be of sin the double cure,
Save from wrath and make me pure."

This brings us to consider the fulness of the salvation set forth in our text. The believer is assured, not only that he shall not

perish, but that he shall have eternal life. We have Christ's promise of deliverance, not only from the damning effects of sin, but, likewise from its enslaving power; not of God's pardoning mercy merely, but of our adoption by him to a new sonship, a joint-heirship with his only begotten. We are saved by faith from that "death whose pang outlasts the fleeting breath, around which such eternal horrors hang." This were mercy undeserved. But this is only a part of the inestimable boon, bestowed by Christ:—

"Beyond this vale of tears
There is a life above,
Unmeasured by the flight of years,
And all that life is love."

This is the believer's bright inheritance; the life which Christ has promised in the land of the heavenly Canaan.

Let this be your portion, my hearers; it is yours, if you will receive it. The glorious purchase has been made by the Lamb, once offered for the sins of the world. Look steadfastly on the crucified Redeemer. Let your eye never wander from that healing standard; your soul never rest on any other support. And then will he, who is "Yea and Amen" for faithfulness, forever keep you from falling. He will never leave you nor forsake you, but will present you before his Father's throne, washed and sanctified; meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. May God prosper the good work of diffusing the benefits of Christ's precious blood-shedding, until all his dispersed sheep shall be brought into the true fold, and be sealed with the certain pledges of eternal salvation.

SERMON XXXV.

“Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us. Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children.”—PSALM xc. 15, 16.

THIS psalm is called a prayer of Moses, the man of God. On account of its sober and solemn thought of man's frailty as a child of the dust, doomed, after his fleshly nature, to return to dust again; it is used in the burial service set forth by our branch of Christ's holy church. But it is not of mortal frailty alone that the man of God speaks, in words which sink so deeply into the heart of every reflecting sharer of the common heritage. There are closely linked with this heritage, sorrows of many kinds and of different degrees, which come up in review, as the record of experience and careful observation is made. And these are noted not merely as belonging to man's nature, just as the friend of Job could declare that “man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward,” which an undevout philosopher might freely say; but as a portion of the lot assigned to him by a far seeing and overruling providence of God. It is in this connexion that the Christian teacher and the Christian professor should always view them. Sorrows and troubles, then, become trials and chastisements, parts of one great remedial system which has been established by an almighty, ever present and ever gracious Being, who has revealed himself as the Father of his intelligent creatures.

And what a rich grouping of subjects, worthy the serious and earnest contemplation of every such creature. The mortality and swift-decaying state of man's bodily nature, the impending doom of his imperishable part when the grave shall claim its own, the pains and sorrows which cling to flesh, marking an end and

aim devised by him who joined the soul to the body for trial and judgment; these thoughts quicken man to a sense of duty and responsibility, and fill his mind with hope and fears for himself, love alternately swaying him, and with awe for the majesty, and for the goodness of God.

The providence of God being duly recognised, as it is by the Psalmist, the prompt appeal for help in time of trouble and affliction is always to be made to the same hand from which they came. And this doctrine gives to the Christian a staff to lean on in his way through life, however rough and toilsome; and a balm for the soul's refreshing, however wounded by the stroke of affliction, or weary with watching for deliverance from wo.

A father wields the rod, and if he spare not, who shall doubt his love? And when the chastening, which for the present may seem grievous, shall have wrought its designed and proper work, the subject of that chastening will have the happy experience prayed for by the psalmist: "Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us."

On behalf of the church and people of God, he shows by the prayer which he utters, his sense of dependence on the same divine hand which had caused them to be afflicted. Thou, O God, who rulest thy people Israel, hast led us in the way of sorrow. We bow to thy chastening power; but, O God, how long wilt thou hide thy face from us? Turn us again into the paths of joy and gladness. "Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us." May our days of prosperity and rejoicing be equal to those of our adversity and mourning.

Apart from their peculiar condition, as a nation selected by the Almighty to be the subjects of his special government as such, the history of the Israelites is but a type of that of the church of Christ, or of any community of men, so far as it displays the particular providence of God. He ordereth all things in heaven and on earth. And well will it be for all who acknowledge his personal existence, to look to him as the sovereign Disposer of the events of life. Much more strongly does this reflection commend itself to those who are taught by the word of God, through his Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, that all things shall work together for good to them that love him.

As Christians, we may use the language of our text, either in-

dividually, or as a church and community, in regard to God's dealings with us; especially when with a heavy heart we look back upon the sad history of the community in which we live. In common with several sister cities and other neighbouring portions of our southern country, our own city has been visited with the pestilence which walketh in darkness, and the destruction that wasteth at noonday, to a degree hitherto unknown by us. A darker cloud of sorrow has enveloped us than ever before shrouded our oft afflicted city, just when we had indulged the fond hope, almost the assurance of entire exemption from all liability to such dreadful scourges. The deep wail of sorrow is yet echoing in the hearts of those who have only heard its note afar. Each heart knows the bitterness of its own sorrow; and while the absent could very imperfectly realize the dismay and desolation which swept over the places visited by the plague, it is, on the other hand, hard to estimate the weight of anxiety, the painful suspense and apprehension, and the sharp conflict which harassed and oppressed the hearts of the absent, who were bound by the closest ties, and knit by the tenderest sympathies with the immediate subjects of the divine visitation; for such it really was. And we would fix the mind and heart upon this truth. Dark and appalling as the cloud was which passed over us, the hand of our God directed it. It was his chastening, bitter though it seems; and we are taught by the precious word of God, that "behind a frowning providence he hides a smiling face." Let us endeavour to see that face through the cloud which covers it, and find comfort in the view. Let us see in this afflictive providence the wise chastening ordained by our heavenly Father for our spiritual well being. In the midst of our sorrow, however deep its gushings, let there be mingled with it the fervent prayer to God that he will make us glad according to the days wherein he has afflicted us, that he will not only help us to bear our sorrows patiently and meekly, but will also give us such clear views of our dependence on him, and of his love for us, as will cause our hearts to burn with love for him, and a desire to honour him more, and to serve him better. And to him we must look for real and abiding comfort. The world cannot afford a remedy for the wounds which it did not cause. Time may scar them over without healing them. The only healing balm must come from the hand which smote—the hand of our Father and our God.

If, then, our hearts turn God-ward in earnest supplication for his spiritual blessing, we may receive in answer such enlarged views of God's merciful dealings with us—of the vanity of all earthly things in comparison with the blessedness of another life, and such a peaceful state of child-like submission to a father's guidance, that we may be truly made glad according to the measure of our past sorrow: a consummation devoutly to be wished for by every responsible creature, especially by every professing Christian. And the teaching of God's chastening dispensation is not for those only who suffered from sickness or bereavement. Others need the lesson, and may read it with great profit. If, at a season of security and fancied exemption from epidemic disease, the wasting pestilence may come, sweeping from the earth multitudes who seemed to have a long lease of life; should not the careless liver who has put off till old age or final sickness, all the work of preparation for death and judgment, take warning from the providence, and learn to become wise unto salvation?

In vain do men hope to have opportunity to prepare to meet their God during their last sickness; especially such sickness as has lately visited us. My own personal experience as well as observation, has taught me that lesson. If repentance and faith shall not have done their work in time of health, wo to the man whom pestilence seizes with the strong arm that drags to judgment. Let us all, my hearers, whatever may be our spiritual state, call upon the Lord our God, who alone can do for us what we need, and ask that he will "make us glad according to the days wherein he has afflicted us."

We regard the second verse of our text as closely connected with, and indeed explanatory of the first. It shows how we are to be made glad—in what that gladness consists, and by what means it is made manifest. "Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children." That is, in the spiritual application which we would make of the whole text, let the wholesome teaching of thy providence be seen in the character and conduct of the subjects thereof, in the unmistakable proofs of its working, the fruits of the Spirit of grace. Let it appear to be the work of God indeed. For there is a too common and lamentable result of providences misunderstood or disregarded, which we would not leave unnoticed. There is often a callousness of heart

confirmed, if not generated, by the suddenness and wide-spread extent of fatal disease, which is a dreadful perversion of the true teaching of God's remedial providences. While God would soften the heart, wean it from the world to which it is too prone to cling, and teach it by the clearest signs how unstable are all the things thereof, that heart rejects the teaching, and says to itself, "Live as fast as you can—it may be your turn next—death shows no favour—let us try to forget it altogether." This is the secret language of many a man who has been hardened in his unbelief by the very warnings which should have brought him in penitence and faith to the feet of a bleeding and blessed Saviour. Or the very ripeness of fatal sickness may have caused such familiarity with the form and features of death that its near approach is treated with indifference.

Desperate, indeed, is the condition of such persons. We trust that few have been brought to it by the recent visitation of God's afflictive providence. To the "servants" of God, (and of these the psalmist speaks,) the teaching of his good providence is specially addressed. "Let thy work appear to thy servants," is his prayer. And if it only be made clear to those servants, that the affliction referred to was God's work, the direct dealings of his providence, then will the remedial work, which was the end of the providence, also appear—be manifested in the chastened servant of the Lord. Many such servants can say truly, under the promptings of a heart gladdened with a sober joy by the sad experience of God's chastening love, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." And some, doubtless, besides David of old, can add, with a realizing sense of the work of the Lord, in correcting spiritual short-comings, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now, O Lord, I have kept thy law."

May this work of the Lord clearly appear to us and in us, his professed servants. As a community, may our people, as willing as any, either to bear or to relieve sickness, however severe, receive a new and fruitful lesson, not only in the charity which would heal the sickness, and minister to the comforts of their neighbours, but also in that higher charity which will move them to the diligent keeping of their own souls. May the work of God appear in the careful girding of our loins, and the trimming of our lamps for the coming of our Lord. Nor can we look at the

deep and wide track made in our midst by the march of death, without being reminded of our duty to give to the masses around us the pure word of God and the ordinances of the church. May God be glorified through the saving of souls by our instrumentality.

And the "glory of God" is prayed for by the psalmist in our text: not only "the work of God," but his glory also. His work, indeed, is his glory in one sense surely, and that in the view which we have taken. The glory of God is shown chiefly in his grace. The crowning display of it was made in the act of gracious condescension known as the incarnation—in taking upon him the nature of man, to work out his salvation. Angels desire to look into the mysteries of that grace, to find in them new themes of glory to God. Now every working of the power of God unto salvation, upon the heart of his believing children, is, to the extent of that working, a reflecting of the grace, which devised and wrought the plan of redemption. May that grace be strongly and clearly reflected in us and by us, as a church taught by the wise provision of our time-honoured Prayer Book to contemplate our Saviour in all his offices and in all periods of his history, including his sure but sudden and unlooked for coming again to judge the world. Called as we are, by this voice of our holy mother, to consider these things in their order, may our thoughts be quickened and our seriousness be deepened by the late powerful teaching of God's providence, coming in aid of the word which he has revealed to us, for the setting forth of his glory. May we strive so to exhibit all the fruits of the Spirit, that if we should be called with no immediate warning to leave this scene of probation, we may be prepared to offer to our Lord and Master a sure proof of his indwelling in our hearts. And not only as a church, but also as individual subjects of its great Founder, and members of the body of which he is the Head, "God over all blessed forever;" let us, each, in the state of life to which he is called by God, strive to profit by all his teachings—not merely heeding the trumpet call of his most startling and direful providences, but gathering up likewise the faintest whisperings of his secret monitions for the furtherance of our godliness and his glory.

Let not these tokens of God's yearnings for man's final salvation, be observed only for the moment, and be soon forgotten. It is often said by some, for a show of comfort administered for a

time, and by others from a want of due sensibility, "Oh! these things will soon be no more remembered." And we fear that such may be the case with most of us. This is just what we would not desire. We would have the afflictive providence of God stamped upon the memory forever, not for the perpetuation of sorrow—but of that godliness which is the proper fruit of Christian sorrow. We would have the soul-quickening recollection of God's merciful chastisement pass as a heritage to the rising generation, that the glory of God, through the work of God may, in the words of the sacred writer, appear unto "the children" of his servants. May our growth in holiness, watered by tears of sorrow, whose precious balm is God's love, be shown to our children, that they may take lessons of wisdom and become a seed to serve the Lord. And it is not without good reason that we press this matter with much emphasis. For the hopes and the fears of the church of Christ are fixed upon the generations now coming forward to share with us the duties and responsibilities of life. Let not, then, the young be taught by our example to look upon death, by pestilence or any other natural cause, or the pains and sorrows of life as the allotments of chance, which they should meet with stoical firmness, or treat with sheer indifference, but let them learn that these are parts of one system of God's dealings, in which may be seen at one view the needy condition of our race, which calls for remedial grace, and the signal display of that grace which sets forth his glory. Well may we strive to inculcate such lessons of wisdom; for the present age is strongly marked with infidelity. This poison to the soul, is infused into the literature which is so greedily seized by the young and imaginative. Forms of speech, habits of thinking, sentiments and practices are allowed and encouraged, whose tendency is to confirm the unwary in irreligion. Let Christian parents beware how they put any stumbling-blocks in the way of the faith and godliness of their children. And we say more; let them have a care that these children be set in the right path, and that their feet be kept therein diligently, by all the proper helps and suasion which can be brought to bear on them during the pliancy of youth.

May the word of God be given them as the ordained rule of life, the covenant relation with God be established and cherished as a strong motive, and lively incentive to obedience to that word.

And however you, yourselves, may be taught wisdom from on high, if tokens for good be shown by your heavenly Father, in his cheering mercies, which bring gladness with them, or in his chastisements of sorrow, out of which we may be brought to gladness, in answer to the prayer of faith—strive to hand down to successive generations the work and the glory of God, by the stamp of godliness impressed on the hearts of your children.

Let us cherish these pious sentiments, and with hearts glowing with love to God and love to each other, as children of the same heavenly Father, and melting with sympathy for those who are sorrowing under bereavement, lift up those hearts in fervent supplication, mingled with devout thanksgiving for the mercy which has spared our own households, and pray in the words of the psalmist, “Make us glad (O God) according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us. Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children.”

SERMON XXXVI.

“If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.”—JOHN vii. 17.

IT is one of the invaluable blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ, that it is preached to the poor and the unlearned. All its precious benefits are not only within their reach, but as easily obtained by them as by the learned and the rich. In this respect the gospel is a great leveller, which breaks down human distinctions and makes all men stand on equal ground, alike subject to God's law, and alike dependent on his grace for the saving knowledge of it.

It is plainly declared in the New Testament, that “God hath confounded the wisdom of the wise, and the understanding of the prudent,” but has made the way of eternal life easily attainable by the simple seeker after truth. Indeed our Lord has assured us, that except we become as little children, knowing nothing of ourselves, and teachable even in the rudiments of religious knowledge, we cannot become members of his spiritual kingdom. And he rejoices that he is the Mediator of such a covenant, the bearer of such a dispensation to man, by which it has pleased the Father to hide the knowledge of spiritual things from the worldly wise, and to reveal it unto babes.

The simple explanation of this is, that the natural man cannot discern the things of the Spirit. The wise and the simple, the adept in every language, and the poor peasant that can hardly read the scriptures in his own tongue, stand equally in need of divine light to guide them. And they will equally receive it. Else were the gospel a partial system, and no gospel at all to the mass of mankind. For if all the learning which is requisite to the full

understanding of Holy Scripture, in all its parts and bearings, were necessary to qualify every man to become a Christian and the heir of salvation, how few would come to the knowledge of Christ as a Redeemer! How many who had been shut out from the means of obtaining a share in His redeeming love, would be condemned for rejecting Him! And how cruel would be the decree which declares a man guilty of sin, and obnoxious to punishment for not believing in the Lord Jesus! Yet unbelief is condemned by the Saviour and by His apostles. The gospel passes severe judgment on them that reject the salvation which it offers. It would not be just and consistent, however, to affix a dreadful penalty to the offence of unbelief, if such an amount of learning were necessary in order to believe, as few could possibly attain. The mere fact that unbelief is condemned in all, without respect to advantages of education or learning, shows that all which it is necessary to know and believe, as a condition of salvation, is so plainly revealed, that every one, however humble and illiterate, may, with the promised and available help, be able to secure it. When it is declared that "he that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be condemned," it is surely meant that all which must be believed, is within the reach of every one—else many would be condemned for not doing what it was not in their power to do. But God is not such a hard master. Any assurance of such unequal dealing would be enough to set aside the whole system, as putting forth false claims to divine authority. The gospel, however, is perfectly consistent with itself. It demands faith of the lowest as well as the highest order of human intelligence; but at the same time it assures all who hear it, that they can believe if they will—and that if they ask, they shall obtain such help as will make all their endeavours effectual.

While, therefore, the sinner is required to believe in Jesus Christ in order to be saved, he is only required to know and believe so much as is necessary to salvation. And this he is assured that he can know and believe if he will pursue the course marked out by the gospel itself. Now it is the doctrine of St. Paul, (who understood the Christian religion, if it ever was understood, or designed to be,)—that "no man can say Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost." This, then, is the illuminating power, by which every humble seeker after truth may become enlightened in the

knowledge of the Scriptures, and without which no learning or genius will be of any avail. The same divine power, which under the name, and in the person of the Comforter, was sent into the world to teach the apostles all things, and to bring to their remembrance all things which Christ had said unto them, is promised to all who will earnestly seek his influence and support. "Ask, and ye shall receive," is the assurance of our Saviour, to all who will hear his gospel. "If ye then give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them who ask him?" And this Spirit is ever waiting to bestow his help. His language is, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in unto him." Such is the ready help which every one may have, who will humbly and earnestly ask for it. But if any will not seek it, have they reason to complain that they do not find it? And are not men justly liable to condemnation for unbelief—if, with all necessary helps within reach, they neglect these helps, and so reject the truth which they might have received.

It is a plainly declared doctrine of Scripture, that unbelief is a sin of the heart rather than of the mind. It speaks of "an evil heart of unbelief." And the true cause of the rejection of the saving doctrines of the New Testament is, in most cases, a wicked disposition. Not, indeed, always a disposition to break the moral law—but a will opposed to the will of God, seeking its own gratification, and exalting itself against divine authority. Moved by this spirit of opposition, many refuse to consider the awful subject of eternal retribution, and the declared mode of escaping its severe awards.

But of those who pretend to seek salvation through a knowledge of the Scriptures, and complain that they cannot find it, most, if not all, are fairly chargeable with an evil heart of opposition to God. We are assured of this by the words of our text. Our Lord plainly says that "if any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God,"—shall be fully satisfied that the Christian religion is divine, and therefore imperative in its demands upon all to whom it is preached. Here we learn that a sincere desire and an honest endeavour to learn the will of God in order to do it, will be rewarded with such help as will lead to the knowledge of the truth. The language of our

Lord is positive. "He shall know." Hence all the requisite means will be afforded. We look upon the text as a divine promise, that if any one shall ask in the spirit of St. Paul, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" the prompt reply will be made, "Go, obey my will so far as it is declared, and it shall be told thee further what thou must do."

Now we might reasonably expect to find just such a declaration as our text contains, when we consider the severe judgment denounced against unbelievers. For if any should say, "We cannot determine whether the Scriptures contain a revelation from God or not; and shall we be condemned for not believing in Christ"—we could not answer them, unless we could find in the Scriptures some such assurance as this which we are now considering. But this is a sufficient answer. Referring to this, we might well ask, how they can object to condemnation for unbelief, when they might have believed, if they had been disposed to do the will of God. Now if any man really wishes to become a Christian, a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, let him do the will of God so far as it is ascertained—and take up the Bible with a desire and a determination to know more of that will, and to do it when he knows it, and he has God's word pledged to him for final and complete success. No matter what may be his capacity for interpreting the sacred writings—whether he has much learning or none at all—the way is open to him, and the guide is at hand. It requires not learning, but grace, to know Jesus Christ, the author of eternal life. The knowledge of all the truth that is necessary to salvation can be acquired by the humblest mind, enlightened, as it will be and must be, by the Holy Spirit. God has given to all men the means of knowing what he wishes them to know, especially what it will be their condemnation not to know. This we might infer from his necessary attributes. But he has confirmed this conclusion by positive testimony, in the declaration of his will through Christ Jesus. And nowhere more strongly than in the words of our text, which make known to us the internal evidence of the truth of the gospel arising from obedience to its precepts.

Let any one, then, who has not a firm faith in the Christian religion, but who really desires to have it, obey all the precepts of Christ which commend themselves to his conscience, and persevere in the study of the Scriptures, with the hope of imbibing their

spirit, and it will not be long before he will have arrived at the full conviction, that they are God's word, given for the salvation of his soul. The promise of such an experimental knowledge of the truth, is so clear and positive, that they who will not trust it, and make the trial, are surely without excuse, and must be adjudged worthy of condemnation for unbelief. For they have rejected the best evidence that could be presented—that which the wisdom and benevolence of God has adapted to all minds alike. The Christian religion would make very slow progress in this darkened world, and would embrace within its limits, and its blessed influence, a very small number of those to whom it is preached, if none could be satisfied of its truth, but those who could thoroughly examine the historical evidence by which it is supported.

This evidence has employed the learning and patient research of scholars of every age, since that of the apostles, and has continued to defy the scrutiny of the most learned and ingenious skeptics. Christianity is “an anvil, that has broken many a hammer,” and will probably break a great many more. But the internal evidences of Christianity, are the most effectual, because most simple in their nature, and universal in their operation. What is addressed to every one is capable of being proved by every one for himself. And herein is displayed the wisdom, as well as the benevolence of God. The gospel makes its appeal to the heart, even for the establishment of its truth, as well as for the reception of its promises, and the fulfilment of its commandments. “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness,” and consequently unto salvation. And as he must believe in his heart that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world, so he will understand with his heart the religion of Christ, more than with his reason. So we learn from the Scriptures themselves, and so we may learn by observation of the Christian character, in the humble walks of life.

Look at the many instances of great religious knowledge, and religious improvement, in persons who never read anything but the Bible, and who know nothing of the history of the Bible, or of the critical explanation of its text. By applying directly to the heart whatever is plain, they learn to know the meaning of that which, though less plain, is yet susceptible of proof and in-

terpretation by the same rule, its influence on the heart. Thus by taking God at his word, trusting his promises, and obeying his precepts, they learn the meaning of much that is hidden from men of larger capacity, who are not humble enough to be wise. We know not where to look for a more beautiful and striking example of what we mean, than that afforded by "the Shepherd of Salisbury Plain," in an excellent tract under that title, which has had a wide circulation, and we doubt not a wholesome influence. There are few, even of the most practical professors of Christian faith, who could not learn something from his example, which would well repay them for the careful study of it.

We might find much living testimony to the fact, that they who read obediently will understand the Scriptures, so far as it is necessary that they should, which goes to prove the doctrine set forth in our text. Your own recollection of religious biography which you have read, or of religious living which you have observed, may furnish abundant evidence on this point. If we turn to the Scriptures of the Old Testament, we shall note passages of a like import to that which has suggested our present discourse. David testifies to the efficacy of obedience, as an instructor in holy things, when he says: (Psalm cxi.,) "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments." And speaking of himself he says: "I have more understanding than my teachers; because I keep thy commandments."

The simple and easy way of judging the Christian religion—whether it be the true record of redeeming love whereby alone man can be saved,—is to study it with a sincere desire and a settled determination to do the will of God. The man of unsettled opinions may cavil at this, and say, "How can I know what the will of God is, until I determine whether the Christian religion be true or not?" To such a question we reply, God has given you some intimation of his will, in the teachings of conscience. It is the will of God, surely, that you should be honest and impartial. Be sure, then, that you have shown candour and impartiality towards the Scriptures which you are urged to receive. If you have not thus far obeyed the will of God, you have done nothing to entitle you to such light as may be necessary to lead you to the truth. Perhaps you will say, if you are not a believer in Christ,

that you have honestly endeavoured to embrace the truth, but could not satisfy your mind that the Scriptures of the New Testament declare the way of salvation.

We ask you, then, if you have tried all the proofs which they offer you. Have you taken the record on its own terms and judged it by its own words? You find, on a careful examination of it, that the gospel makes certain demands, and certain promises, on condition of complying with these demands. Can you reasonably complain that you cannot attain the promises, if you do not comply with the demands?—Now one of the first promises addressed to the inquirer, is that contained in our text—“If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.” The fair construction of this would seem to be, that if any one will do what the gospel declares to be the will of God, he shall know whether the gospel be indeed a declaration of his will. Hence we have a right to insist that before a man shall be excused for not knowing this, he shall have long persevered in doing all that is commanded, or that he shall at least have shown a disposition to do all that can be done.

Another assurance of the New Testament is, that “we are not sufficient of ourselves to do the will of God, but that our sufficiency is of God.” Our natural infirmity is plainly and often declared. And the Holy Spirit, which is our only sufficient help, is promised to all who ask in humble, fervent prayer.—Now if you have failed to attain the truth, we ask if you have neglected to pray for divine guidance? If so, you have not given the Holy Scriptures a fair trial—you have not used the test which they offer. And will you presume to set aside their claims to reverence as the oracles of God? Will you undertake to satisfy your conscience with the plea that you cannot believe?

Much application of the doctrine contained in our text, may be made by those who profess to believe in the New Testament as the record of a divine revelation, without submitting to the terms of salvation which it declares. These are a large class.—To them we commend the truth, which we derive from the words of our Saviour, that nothing tends more effectually to open the way to a knowledge of the Scriptures than a disposition to do what they plainly enjoin. The more faithfully you put in practice what is clearly revealed, the more you will learn of what it is harder to

understand. Christ is continually unfolding to his sincere disciples the riches of his grace, and exciting them to perseverance in well-doing. The spirit of grace, the spirit of wisdom, and the spirit of obedience, have a reciprocal influence on each other. The more you obey, the more you will know, and the more you know, the more, if you truly believe, will you obey. And how unreasonable would it be to complain of this rule according to which God bestows his grace, and which harmonizes so well with his rule of judgment. He gives the more to those who will improve the gifts already bestowed, just as he exacts with rigid strictness a larger measure of fruit from more abundant means of culture. Why should it be otherwise? Can the negligent and the heedless ask for a repetition of the word of grace which they have heard in vain, or a louder utterance of the voice of truth which they have utterly scorned? Would they add to the weight of condemnation which they must incur?—For such must be the result of every renewed offer of divine grace to a sinner that hardens himself in disobedience. Let no one expect with a fatal confidence that the Spirit of truth will follow him in his headlong course of defiance, or beset him continually while in a state of stupid indifference. God will not be mocked, though he bears long with his creatures, whom he would save from sin and destruction. Let the evil-minded and the stiff-necked bend their wills to a nearer conformity to the will of God, that they may obtain his saving grace. And let those who desire such a knowledge of his word as will give them a perfect peace, strive to cultivate a disposition to do his will, as declared in (His word) the Holy Scriptures, which the church has received. This disposition can be cherished by those only who do that will as far and as fast as they can learn it. Progress in obedience will bring increase of knowledge and growth in spiritual wisdom and strength. If you feel the grace of baptism leading you to a participation of the holy sacrament of the supper, show your reverence for an apostolic ordinance by receiving the rite of confirmation. If you have never had Christian baptism, and feeling some motions of the Spirit towards practical piety, wish to be quickened still more by divine influence, go at once to the baptismal font, and there receive the pledge of such influence, in exchange for your pledge of devotion to Christ the divine Saviour. And whatever may be your religious state,

let it be remembered that God has promised to reward every effort to do his will with such a measure of grace as will lead you, step by step, to that holiness which will make you meet for the kingdom of heaven.

May those who are almost persuaded to be Christians be brought to the feet of Jesus, in true faith and deep repentance; may all who have professed to be his followers, be found ever sitting at his feet, humbly seeking that divine wisdom which will show forth his praise on earth, and will open to them eternal treasures, when he shall share his glory with those whom he has redeemed.

SERMON XXXVII.

“And, above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.”—
COLOSSIANS iii. 14.

AMIDST the strife of Christians about the faith once delivered to the saints, by the holy apostles of Jesus, it will be well if a voice can be heard, bidding them all consider how vain are all creeds and forms of worship, without that spirit of Christ which is the plain mark of true discipleship. That we should believe in all the doctrines of our religion, and earnestly contend for them against all error, meekly instructing them that oppose the truth, is a duty too clearly taught to be doubted. And of this earnestness there is no lack; for the pride of opinion, the love of triumph, and the desire of strengthening his party, all combine to urge each individual to a zealous maintenance of the cause which he has espoused. But the meekness which is enjoined by the Christian Scriptures, (as all agree,) is a much rarer quality, since it is very hard to preserve it in connexion with religious zeal. It requires a degree of restraint and self-control, which they who are “valiant for the truth,” do not sufficiently practise. Making allowance for peculiarity of temperament, we may safely affirm, that they who seek, with most singleness of heart, the glory of God in the extension of truth, by their zeal for the doctrines which they maintain, will have most of that meekness of spirit, which makes argument more powerful, by conciliating the prejudices which blunt its point.

Meekness, however, displayed in argument, or under affront, is a quality (in itself commendable, and highly commended by our Lord and his apostles,) which springs from that principle, just referred to as the mark of true discipleship, and which is so forcibly

inculcated in our text. This principle is charity, or love,—for this is the comprehensive meaning of charity, in the language of the Holy Scriptures. It is a brotherly affection, which Christians are exhorted to cherish for each other chiefly, but likewise for all the world. Its importance, as an ingredient of the Christian character, and a manifestation of the Christian faith, in its influence on the heart, may be estimated by the language of St. Paul, in the text and elsewhere, as well as by that of the other apostles. He says to the Colossians, after having exhorted them to clothe themselves with mercy, humility, meekness and long-suffering, as with garments, “and above all these things, (or over all,) put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.” This is to be worn as an outward garment, the badge or livery of Christ’s servants. It is to be conspicuous as a distinguishing feature of their character, as the disciples of a holy and divine Saviour. He calls it “the bond of perfectness,” which is an expression, in the Hebrew idiom, equivalent to “the perfect bond” in our own idiom, by which he means that charity or Christian love binds together, in the closest union, all the members of the church, (however scattered,) like the various parts of one body, making them, (like these,) subservient to each other, and moving them as by one will, to promote a common cause. This bond of union is a grace of the highest value, in the estimation of all the apostles, who have left us their written testimony to the truth, as it is in Jesus. In the first Epistle to Timothy, St. Paul calls it “the end of the commandment.” St. Peter shows his sense of the value of it by this exhortation: “Above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves, for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.” St. James calls it “the royal law.” St. John declares, that it is “the fulfilling of the law.” And our Lord himself speaks of it as the “new commandment” which he gave his disciples. These are some of the particular expressions of the Scriptures, in regard to that principle which we now commend to your careful consideration. Being so important, it ought to be well understood, and diligently cultivated. And we cannot better employ the time which we may now spend together, than in considering the nature, manifestations and motives, to the exercise of Christian charity. If, then, we are asked what it is, we may say very briefly, that it is a principle of love and beneficence towards our fellow men, and especially

our fellow Christians. It is a fixed principle, resulting from faith in Christ, constant in its operation, modified perhaps, but not restrained, by circumstances of being. It is not to be confounded with that good nature which is constitutional. And it must be equally distinguished from that impulsive benevolence, towards those who have some traits of character that we admire, or who in some way excite our unwonted generosity and kindness. The love which the Scriptures enjoin, (as the sure evidence of true discipleship,) recognises the claims of the whole human family, upon our affection, and is drawn out by a sense of obligation to the Saviour, who, moved by love, offered himself in sacrifice for all mankind, not for particular classes of men, and taught his disciples to show their sense of his benefits, by imbibing his spirit, and following his example. It implies an earnest desire for the welfare of others, a hearty satisfaction and delight in their prosperity, and a sincere commiseration of their misfortunes and sorrows. These feelings may be expressed in various ways. The desire will find vent in the offering of fervent prayer and supplication to Him who metes out prosperity to the children of men, and who has encouraged them to pray for each other. This prayer may be put forth in general terms for all our fellow mortals, or it may have a special reference to the condition of individuals, or particular classes of them, adapting itself to their peculiar circumstances.

He who has a heart glowing with Christian love, will be moved to frequent and powerful intercession with God, through the divine Saviour, in behalf of all whom God hath made after the same image, and Christ hath redeemed with the same blood. He will do this spontaneously, to discharge the fulness of a grateful heart, as well as deliberately, with the hope of obtaining benefits for them. And every one that has a just sense of the love of Christ for him, displayed in that grace wherein he stands, will have a heart glowing with charity, which will seek utterance of its fulness in the language of intercessory prayer. He cannot contemplate the goodness and mercy of God, the wonderful interposition of divine love between himself and destruction, without considering at the same time, the solemn and earnest injunction of his Saviour, "that he should love even as he had been loved," and embracing within his warmest sympathies, the whole

human family. This is grateful affection, the generous tribute of a heart that is sensible of benefits received, that are of inestimable value, and can only show its thankfulness by an obedience to Christ, who has commanded mutual love as an evidence of love for himself.

Besides this grateful affection, there is what may be called the love of second nature—that which Christians feel for each other, as brothers in Christ by adoption. We call it a feeling of second nature, because, as brothers by birth are bound together by a natural affection, so are they who are brothers in Christ, (through that adoption by which they become sons of God,) bound together by an affection which springs directly from their new relation. With this spontaneous feeling, there is mingled, (as we may discover by analysis,) some gratitude to him through whom the relation is established. This love between Christians, as brothers by the new birth, and that which is entertained by them for all mankind, will induce intercessory prayer, as an expression of desire for the welfare of those who are thus loved. But besides this expression of such desire, (which may be given without the knowledge of those for whose benefit it is designed,) charity will prompt the Christian to give his fellow men, as occasion may serve, an assurance of his good will towards them, and his good wishes for their welfare. Such an assurance may cheer the hearts of those to whom it is given, and add something to their happiness. And, therefore, our duty to ourselves as Christians, bound to show by all means our consistency of character; and to our Saviour, whose precept and example, direct us to the most extensive beneficence, will prompt us to give it.

True charity implies also, as we have said, a hearty delight in the prosperity of others, and consequent efforts to promote it by actual benefits. Where this holy fruit of the Spirit is found, there is no place for envy. No matter how great be the superiority of our neighbour's fortune to our own, we cannot but rejoice in it, if we abound in that love which is the bond of perfectness. It will follow, of course, from this satisfaction with our neighbour's prosperity, that we shall make efforts to increase it. Doing good is the best and most natural way of showing a good feeling towards others. This active exercise of charity is particularly enjoined by our Saviour, who, in all his ministry on earth,

beautifully exemplified what he taught. "To do good and communicate, forget not," is the language of the apostle, which sets forth the duty of contributing, in any way that we can, to the comfort and the support of the needy and the afflicted. To give alms of what we possess is only one of the forms of active charity, but it is one so common and obvious, that the word "charity" has become, in ordinary use, synonymous with alms-giving. But in whatever way we may promote the well being of our fellow men, we are bound in charity to do it. We should be ready at all times to protect, instruct, advise and comfort them. If any trouble befall them, we should feel a deep sympathy for them, and show that sympathy by a prompt and diligent endeavour to relieve them. To cheer the desolate with our society, to heal the sick, and comfort the mourners with expressions of sympathy, and with the consolations of religion, are acts of charity which it behooves the Christian habitually to perform.

Nor should he be careful only to minister to the temporal wants of his neighbour, in the various modes of relief which may present themselves. Spiritual wants call for a deeper sympathy, and more delicate attention. Often may it fall to the lot of a private Christian, to behold cases of religious despondency, that he may relieve by his timely and judicious counsel. Then it becomes him to be a speedy minister of consolation to the forlorn soul; to probe the wound which pains, that he may lay sweet unction at the bottom; and to draw, if he can, from his own experience, reflections that may bring a cheering assurance to the heart of his despairing brother. So, too, he may be called to confront religious error, and if so, he should be ready to speak the truth in love, meekly instructing them that oppose it. This should be particularly observed. For though you may think that truth always carries its own justification, and therefore may be careless of the mode of stating it, yet charity will suggest the most cautious and gentle mode of correction. It prompts the Christian to inculcate his own views of what the gospel teaches, when he has reason to expect a patient hearing. But it allows no indignant reproof of honest opinion, no rebuke in wrath of the heresy that he condemns. Hence, while there is no breach of charity in withholding correction of religious error, when there is no reason to believe that any good would come of it, we are surely guilty of

such breach in bestowing it in an improper spirit. To maintain truth at all times is the duty of every one. But so it is equally his duty to exercise charity. The spiritual interests of our fellow men should be dear to us, and should call forth our proper zeal in their behalf. But we should always consider whether our zeal for their improvement may not be so unwisely exerted as to defeat our good purposes, by making them more confirmed in error. Though they might patiently hear the truth, if properly enforced, they may rebel against the spirit and mode in which it is addressed to them, and so reject it entirely.

While on this branch of our subject, we cannot refrain from noticing the confusion of ideas which widely prevails, in regard to charity, as connected with religious opinion. If we maintain the truth of the doctrines which we profess, in the face of those who entertain very different views of religious truth, we are often charged with a want of charity. Now it is very plain that a man's views of religious truth cannot be affected by charity. He may have all the love for his fellow men that the gospel enjoins, and may desire earnestly their spiritual welfare, and wish that they could be led to entertain those views which he thinks would best promote that welfare, and yet he cannot help differing from them. If, then, there is no breach of charity in holding certain opinions in regard to scriptural doctrines, there can be none in viewing opposite opinions as erroneous. This follows as a matter of course. And if duty requires that we should say what are erroneous, where is the want of charity? It can only be found in the spirit with which our own views are propounded, and others which conflict with them are condemned. If the truth be spoken in triumph, with a contempt for those who differ from us, or with a disposition to vex them, then, surely, there is a great want of charity. But there can be no greater charity than to speak the truth with a good motive, with a desire to correct and lead into the right way those who "have erred and are deceived." True charity induces forbearance under provocation, according to the description of St. Paul in the 13th chap. 1 Corinthians: "It suffereth long and is not easily provoked." Now it has been said, and well said too, that it is the second blow which makes the quarrel, and hence charity, which makes for peace, will restrain the hand that would retaliate an injury. So it will prompt us to

keep the mastery over the tongue, that we offend not in word. But how few do this! How few even among Christians come up to St. James' standard of a perfect man! He says, "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body."

How often do Christians heedlessly, and even wilfully provoke each other by harsh censure or untimely reproof! How often do those who can command their temper, worry their weaker brethren into acts of indiscretion, or expressions of anger and impatience! In religious conversation or controversy, it is a great breach of charity to urge on to such indiscretions, a temper naturally weak and irritable, or one already tried beyond its power of endurance. Forbearance is the duty of a Christian in such cases. He should always strive to save the weak from that danger into which they are liable to be hurried by their own imprudence. "We that are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak," says the apostle to the Romans. And it is much more charitable to please our neighbour, by yielding to his innocent whims and peculiarities of temper, than to vex and annoy him, by endeavouring to correct them. We should refrain from doing what is in itself allowable, if it have a tendency to injure our neighbours. And this leads to a point which deserves especial consideration, the connexion between charity and self-denial. It prompts the Christian to abstain from those permitted things, which may be abused by others weaker than himself, who might be encouraged by his example in the use of that which will eventually destroy them. Hence if a Christian who has been in the habit of using temperately, among temperate people, that which may intoxicate, is placed in contact with those who are prone to drink to excess, the love which the gospel enjoins will plead strongly with him for a total abstinence. Of the peculiar call for self-denial in any particular case, each individual is the proper judge. It is a matter between himself and his conscience, the enforcer of God's law. Highly commendable is he who abstains at all times, prompted by so pure a motive as the desire of saving, so far as his influence extends, by the force of his example, all who might be led into ruinous excess.

One other mark of charity demands our notice. It is seen in a disposition to have a good opinion of our neighbours, to put the

best construction upon their conduct, and never to impute bad motives, when it can be explained satisfactorily, on the supposition of good ones. Charity prompts us to extenuate rather than exaggerate faults. Has a fault been committed? Ascribe it to weakness rather than malice. Thus shall ye conform to the pure and holy teaching of that Saviour who said, "Judge not, that ye be not judged." Thus will ye display the working of that charity "which thinketh no evil."

These are some of the marks and evidences of that spirit of love, which is set forth in the Scriptures as the sure sign of a disciple of Christ. The motives to its cultivation and constant exercise, are neither few nor small. It should be enough that Christ has enjoined it, as a proof of our just sense of his love for us, of the benefits of his sacrifice, and of his precious instruction in the way of righteousness. And it is certain that the more highly we appreciate these benefits, the more will our hearts glow with that love for our fellow Christians and our fellow men, which is one of the fruits of faith. But there is motive enough in the happiness derived from the exercise of this feeling. It is twice blessed. It blesses him who gives, as well as him who receives. Indeed it is essential to the Christian character. St. Paul declares that, however great may be our knowledge of the truth which Christ has proclaimed, and our belief of that truth, we are nothing in the sight of God, as Christians, if we have not charity. Hence we have strong motives to cultivate this excellent grace. Without it, we cannot have the approbation of our Saviour, whose chief commandment is that we should love one another. And without it we cannot be satisfied that we have even that faith which justifies the sinner in the sight of God. Wherefore "follow after charity." Cultivate with constant care this heavenly principle, which contains within itself the burden of the song which angels sang at our Saviour's birth, "Peace on earth, good-will towards men."

SERMON XXXVIII.

“And he cried unto the Lord; and the Lord showed him a tree, which, when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet.”—Exodus xv. 25.

WE have here a striking incident, in the history of God's peculiar people, the Israelites, to whom he made known, as his church, by types and prophecies, his purposes of grace. That grace was not to be shut up to this nation alone, but was designed to embrace all mankind. Yet as from them the Redeemer of the world must spring, whose claims, when he should appear, must be proved by sure witnesses; it pleased God to take them under his special government, and deal with them just as if no other nation in the world would ever share his love. According to his wise purpose, he dealt with them both as a nation, under his immediate government, and as a church, to which promises were given, that should embrace in their full scope, all the people of the earth, who might, in time to come, be received into that church. While, therefore, as a nation, the Jews were encouraged to obedience by temporal rewards, and punished for rebellion by temporal judgments; as a church, having within itself the germ of that catholicism, which has since been developed, they were the subjects of a typical experience, as well as a prophetic teaching, which may be read by the spiritual Israel, for their edification and comfort.

The typical sacrifices, and the prophecies of redemption, we must apply to the true Antitype, and the gracious fulfilment—Jesus of Nazareth. And where no designed foreshadowing can be recognised, we may find in the perfect adaptation of incidents of national history, to our own individual experience, as well as that of the church of Christ, both reason and comfort in applying them. All that happened to the Jews, while they were the Lord's

own people, may serve for example and instruction to us; and in a series of dispensations, so connected as those are which open to man the mysteries of divine grace, we know not that any striking incident should be set aside, as having no spiritual meaning. But if there be any such, we may be assured of this, that if it behooves us, as subjects of God's love and care, to turn to our spiritual advantage, all the marked portions of our own experience, it cannot be amiss to make the like use of that of a people, whose history was written for our learning.

We make these preliminary remarks for the benefit of those who may not have considered the close connexion—the oneness, we may say, of the Mosaic and the Christian revelation. Many view them as distinct and unconnected systems. But such is not the case. The Christian church was instituted by a Jew, and consisted at first only of Jews,—who were the church of God,—to whom were given prophecies and promises of the very enlargement, which it received through the calling of the Gentiles. The present church was, therefore, made of the church which had Moses for a mediator, and Aaron for a priest. And the redemption accomplished by our Lord Jesus Christ, was not only exactly prefigured under the Mosaic dispensation, but was ordained in the beginning. Christ was the “Lamb slain from the foundation of the world;” that is, whose sacrifice was ordained then. And all God's revelations to man had reference to this sacrifice, from the first faint gleam of hope that fell on the guilty pair in paradise, when it was declared that “the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head,” down to Malachi's prophecy of the herald that should come in the spirit and power of Elijah, John Baptist, who, at the time appointed, said of Jesus:—“Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world.” Moses and David, as rulers and prophets of the elect people, were types of Christ, and as in the acts of Moses, we find some foreshadowings of the mediation of Christ, so in the Psalms of David, we discover prophetic descriptions of his kingdom, and bewailings of his sorrows. In this book of devotion, we have, both as a church and as individuals, true, varied, and beautiful expressions of religious experience, which we cannot study without profit, or apply without comfort. There, too, we find abstracts of the history of the Jews, which are recited for praise, or pondered for instruction, or re-

ferred to as remembrances of God's mercy, for the solace of afflicted spirits. Inspired teachers thus direct us to the experience of the Jewish people, for examples of instruction, warning, and consolation. Let us, in accordance with that teaching, turn to their history, of which the text opens an interesting page.

At the time referred to, the Israelites had been led by Moses from the borders of the Red Sea into the wilderness of Shur. The deserts of Arabia afford water only in a few places, far removed from each other; and when found, after days of painful privation, it is often so brackish, as to provoke rather than allay thirst. Such was probably the character of the water found at "Marah" by the Israelites, after three days' wandering, to which reference is made in our text. "And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, 'What shall we drink?' And he cried unto the Lord; and the Lord showed him a tree, which, when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet." The wonder here is not that water which was not fit for use, was made palatable, by throwing into it a tree of peculiar quality; for such a tree might be found, whose natural properties would remove the bitterness from the water; but it appears in this, that in the desert, where trees are rarely seen, and just where it was needed, the tree should be found. This would be wonderful, even if Moses had chanced to discover it. But the Lord, who brought the people into the desert by the hand of Moses, showed him the tree, and as we have reason to conclude, told him to cast it into the water. And the same Lord, who could cause the stream to flow from the rock at his command, could, and perhaps did, give to the tree a quality for that exigency, which it did not usually possess. This is certain, viz., that Moses acted by God's direction. The hand of the Lord is here plainly seen. God, who led his chosen people through the desert to prove them, brought them, weary and thirsty, to water which they could not drink, because of its bitterness. And when Moses, moved by their murmuring, prayed to the Lord, (which they should have done for themselves,) the Lord showed him a simple and effectual remedy for its bitterness. Bidding you bear in mind these few simple facts, we give to our subject its apt and wholesome spiritual application.

Life, my hearers, is but a pilgrimage, and to many it is a weary one. To the Christian it is one to be made, (like that of the Jews,) under the guidance of God, who has his adopted children under his special care, and will "never leave nor forsake them." On that pilgrimage we are often called to pass through desert places; because God would prove us; for life is a season of probation. Hungry and thirsty, our souls faint within us; and when we are almost spent in the weary search for refreshment, we are mocked with the show of relief. The waters of Marah are offered to our parched lips, and we cannot drink them because of their bitterness. Like Israel, too, we murmur against our guide. Who will intercede for us with God? Happy will it be for us, if we are prompted to pray to God ourselves; pray to him through an Intercessor who is always at hand—Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant; the guide and supporter of all who will trust in his power to save.

Let us make a closer application. Sinful creatures, pilgrims on the road to eternity, beset with snares on every hand, and bearing heavy burdens of conscious corruption, men are brought into great straits,—and in the course of their experience, are compelled to feel that they are in a spiritual wilderness. Within is barrenness—without is desolation. With a revealed heaven before them, whose gate is too narrow for their huge swelling pride, and whose seats are too pure for their known uncleanness: they travel on o'er a sandy path, in which the experience of their fellow travellers ahead has left no track for their guidance, till they begin to sink in utter hopelessness. In this stage of their progress, they catch at the gleam of a baptized philosophy, with a view to reason themselves into hope of acceptance, or plunge into the gulf of worldly pleasure, which they discern in all its tempting show. But these are the waters of Marah; and though the soul drown its feverish apprehensions in them,—they are bitter waters, which will finally drown the soul itself in perdition.

Have you not passed through such a desert, my hearers? Have you not felt spiritual wants that you could not relieve—felt the pressure of thronging sins, which cry for vengeance—been tortured with the fever of unsatisfied cravings for peace of mind? And have you plunged into the deep waters of remorse, which were intolerably bitter, murmuring that you could not drink

them? Or have you followed the blind guides, who would lead you into any of the heresies which rob God of his attributes, and which, like the illusions of the desert, only mock the weary with a deceitful show of refreshing water? If this has been your experience, we may well direct you to Israel's history, for an intimation of prudent counsel. We may earnestly entreat you to call on the Lord for some effectual help—for some powerful remedy for the bitterness of the waters. If you do this—if you cry unto him piteously, (instead of murmuring,) he will show you a tree, which, when you have cast it into the waters, will make them sweet. There is a tree whose leaves are for the healing of the nations—the tree of life everlasting, shooting forth, (as it were,) from that accursed one on which the Lamb of God was sacrificed. The cross of Christ, though cast out by many as a sapless, worthless, hateful thing, has become, like Aaron's rod that budded, the tree of God's own choosing. Grasp it then in faith; and when you are about to drink of the bitter water of hopeless conviction and remorse, cast it into the water; for it, and it alone, will take away the bitterness.

No dry, lifeless philosophy—no painted semblance of the tree of life, wrought by a disordered imagination—no graven image of man's device, can charm the fountain into sweetness. Faith in revealed redemption is the only cure for sin. The blood of a crucified Saviour, is the only cleansing from pollution. You may weep floods of tears under a sense of your sinfulness, but they will be tears of bitterness, if you look only to your own wicked self for atonement. Then only will they be sweet, when you can look in the face of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and see in him who took our nature, that he might be our Saviour, the tear of sympathy, the token of that pitying love which moved him to his precious self-sacrifice. You may wrestle with the goadings of conscience, till you bleed at every pore,—but you can find no peace, till you cast yourselves upon the mercy of him, whose bloody sweat bedewed the garden of Gethsemane.

Oh, then, sinner, if you have been in the world's wide desert, without the refreshing dew of God's love, till your soul was faint,—if, thirsting for the water of life, you have grasped at the delusive phantom, which is but the sure sign of continual drought, or have rushed into the noxious pool, filled with the rank growth

of carnal corruption, go no farther on this perilous track—pause, and consider that it leads to death and everlasting destruction; prostrate yourself before the Lord, and cry unto him for pardon and peace through his eternal Son. In the Lord Jesus Christ, you may find that peace which your soul craves—not in Jesus merely, as some vainly trust, who rob him of his glory, but in Jesus, the Lord and Christ, the Messiah or Anointed—who was foretold by the prophets, and who, in his divine nature, inspired the prophets. In him, and in him alone, can you find salvation.

Oh, why will not men believe in the revealed plan of redemption? Why will not they who live as rational and moral beings here, lay hold on the hope of a blessed hereafter? We are not surprised that they who unfit themselves for any destiny higher than that of beasts, should be willing to die as the beasts. But it is a wonder that the moral portion of mankind should be so irreligious. Ah! there is mystery in irreligion as in religion, and the unbeliever will believe any one but God.

My hearers, give not yourselves up to the delusions of unbelief and sin. Think not to live as if God had not spoken to you, for it will surely be your condemnation, “that light has come into the world, but you have preferred darkness.” Christ spake a word of rebuke for all who reject him, when he said, “If I had not spoken unto them, they had not had sin, but now they have no cloak for their sin.” If there had been no Saviour specially revealed, you might have undertaken to be your own saviour. If no fountain had been opened for man’s uncleanness, he might have sought such cleansing as he felt the need of, at his own hands. Had there been no remedy for the bitter waters of remorse, man would have been acquitted at the bar of reason, though he should have drained them in despair. But since God has declared to him a Saviour, has pointed to a fountain that can never fail, and showed him a tree that will sweeten the bitter waters, it is his own folly and condemnation, if he be not comforted and refreshed, cleansed from his defilement, and saved from eternal wrath. Let the murmurings of your sorrow and distress, be uttered meekly in the invoked presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, and he will be your prompt and prevailing Intercessor with God the Father, for pardon, reconciliation, and peace.

One other view of the text demands our notice. God’s spi-

ritual Israel, the children of the Christian covenant, are often led, for the trial of their faith, through the vale of sorrow. Pilgrims by their very profession, on the way to the land of promise, (of which the Canaan of the Jews was the type,) they are under God's own guidance, fed by the manna of his heavenly grace, and refreshed by the stream from their spiritual Rock, the Lord Jesus Christ. To teach them the value of this heavenly nourishment, and their dependence upon him for it, God is pleased to lead them through desert places, where hunger and thirst shall be severely felt. To prove their faith he leaves them to themselves, that he may know whether they will cleave to him in faith. That is, he seems to do so, for God never leaves those who do not leave him. There are times when the Christian forgets that he is a pilgrim, fastens upon this world, as if it was his home, and even seems to prefer its vanities to all the substantial blessings of the adoption through Christ Jesus. His faith becomes weak, doubts and difficulties beset him. Leaning upon an arm of flesh, he feels his utter inability to bear up under the pressure of spiritual conflicts. Like the self-confident Peter amid the billows of the lake, he is about to sink in despair, saying, "The floods lift up their waves, O Lord," and "The waters have well nigh gone over my soul."

These are bitter waters indeed; what shall take away their bitterness? Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Cast yourself upon him, faltering Christian; trust in him for strength, and he will be as a tree cast into the waters at the command of God. The bitterness of your conflicts will have passed away, when you shall have returned to that humble trust in the power of the Almighty, whose grace you professed to seek and to cherish. Oh, there have been cases of wretchedness beyond all bearing, in which, through neglect of the means of grace, or some morbid feeling which had shut out Christ from the soul, it seemed that the waters of Marah had been poured out largely for the professed children of God. These lacked true faith; they needed the clear vision which could see, even in the midst of darkness, the image of the invisible God, the reflected light of his reconciled countenance, in the face of Jesus Christ, beaming love and tenderness. Let all such cry unto God, and he will show them, in time of trouble, the cheering look, and the saving arm of an eternal Redeemer, and send them the comfort of the Holy Ghost, the Sanctifier.

In the pilgrimage of life, too, there are sorrows that cannot be escaped, under which we can find no support but the hand of Him in whom the Christian trusts. In view of them we may say with the psalmist, who has a strain for every kind of experience, "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee."

Happy indeed are they who, when the floods of affliction come upon them, are not drowned, because of the helping hand of the eternal Saviour! God calls his people, even those whom he best loves, and those most severely does he chasten, to drink of the water of sorrow. In all the various forms of wo that are incident to humanity, he causes them to be afflicted. And when, under the pressure of poverty, sickness, or bereavement, they in the weakness of nature are prone to cry out, "These are the waters of Marah—we cannot drink them," the gospel says, Call upon the Lord, and he will show you a tree, which being cast into the waters, will take away their bitterness. He will bid you look upon the crucified Saviour—upon "the man of sorrows, who bare our griefs, and carried our infirmities," who, by his agony and bloody sweat, by his cross and passion, implores them to consider what God's only begotten and beloved Son endured for them. And that same Saviour, who suffered all kinds of sorrow, even unto the death of the cross, that he might not only save, but pity and comfort all who trust in him, says to the afflicted believer, "Fear not, for I am with thee," "When thou passest through the waters, they shall not overwhelm thee." Yes, he who drained of its bitterness, the cup of sorrow, which, in the agony of the garden, he prayed God the Father to remove from him, if possible, will pour into our cup of sorrow, however bitter, a healing balsam that will make it tolerable.

Cling then to that Saviour whose merits alone can justify you before God—whose Spirit alone can sanctify you, and whose continual presence will comfort and cheer you, in all the trials of life, and can alone guide and support you, in your passage through the dark valley of the shadow of death.

SERMON XXXIX.

“And Jesus put forth his hand and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.”—MATTHEW viii. 3.

AMONG the multitude which followed Jesus after his sermon on the mount, (that beautiful and comprehensive discourse, which has afforded texts of a practical character for preachers in every age of the church,) there was a poor leper who came and worshipped him. This miserable outcast from society, afflicted with a loathsome and incurable disease, and hence shut out from the sympathy and the kind charities of his fellow men, had special need of the blessings of which Jesus had so touchingly spoken—the comforts of a religion which gives assurance of spiritual joys, as a compensation for the sorrows and ills which are meekly borne through life. He may not have heard Jesus speak as never man spake, but he had doubtless heard of the wonder-working power of the man of Nazareth. And having no hope of help from the hands of his fellow men, he bowed himself in the dust before the Lord's Anointed, in humble worship, saying, “Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.” “Lord, if thou *wilt*,” was his piteous appeal. He had been so long used to being repulsed and shunned, by all who wore the form of man, that, much as he revered the character of Jesus, he hardly dared look for pity even from him. And see how he throws himself upon the compassion and mercy of Jesus. He not only does not doubt the power of him whose help is sought, but plainly and promptly declares it. Thou canst, if thou wilt; “I know thy power to heal—wilt thou, too, refuse to have pity on the leper?”

We cannot surely wonder at the doubt expressed by him in regard to the willingness of Jesus to exert his power in behalf of

one who was shut out by the very law of his religion, from social intercourse with his fellow men. Jesus was brought up in subjection to the law which put restraint upon the leper's liberty. And that this poor suppliant knew the fact, we may conclude. Hence he might reasonably fear a repulse. We all know, too, how the suppliant for charity, who has been driven from house to house by the chilling look or the more chilling word, of the niggardly or the distrustful, gives way to despair, and fears to approach even those who are "ready to bestow, and glad to distribute." In the case of the leper there was not only a feeling of misery, but also a sense of degradation through the pollution of a foul disease. Borne down by the weight of this two-fold suffering, he casts himself at the feet of one who has power to heal, with a tender appeal to the mercy which he hardly dares expect. The compassionate Jesus showed himself as willing, as he was supposed to be able, to heal. He put forth his hand and touched the leper, saying, with a voice of divine authority, "I will, be thou clean." Jesus was satisfied with the faith of the suppliant in his power to cleanse from acknowledged pollution, shown in the act of coming to him for relief. He knew and pitied the weakness which led to the expression of doubt in regard to his willingness; and he promptly dispelled that doubt by the act of healing.

Now this, and every act of Jesus, showing his power to work miracles, was done for the purpose of convincing the world into which he came to be a Saviour, of his power to forgive sins. So we may infer from his language in a particular case. Being charged with blasphemy, by the Pharisees, for presuming to say to the man whom he cured of the palsy, "Thy sins are forgiven," he replied, "Which is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Arise, take up thy bed and walk? But, that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, he saith to the sick of the palsy, Arise, take up thy bed and walk." The man obeyed the command and walked, being perfectly cured. It seems very plain that our Lord meant to teach them that the working of such a miracle was sufficient evidence that he could do all that he claimed power to do; that even so bold a pretension as the power to forgive sins was well supported. Agreeably to this rule, we may conclude that the cure of the

leper was designed to show the power of Jesus to cleanse the soul, as well as the body, from pollution. We might infer, if we did not learn it by direct teaching, the willingness to bestow the spiritual blessing. And the circumstances of the case illustrate very clearly the mode of obtaining the mercy of our spiritual Deliverer.

Let us suppose the sinner, one of the multitude to whom Christ is preached, coming to Christ for salvation. In order to obtain it, what will be required of him? He must be conscious of sinfulness, and ready to confess it. He must have faith in Christ's power to save from sin, and be willing to declare it. He must bow down and worship Christ, confessing his need of pardon and grace, and the power of Christ to give what he needs. This low prostration of the soul before a mighty Saviour, (shown in worship and in obedience,) will secure the tokens of love from a merciful and willing Saviour.

1. The sinner must be conscious of sin, and ready to confess it. And is not every one conscious of sin? Can it be that the man lives on earth who is not? Alas, all men are sinners in the sight of God, but not in their own sight. The world is full of sin. Every man born into it needs redemption through God's gracious purposes, revealed and fulfilled in Christ Jesus. But men are slow to believe this. They do not feel themselves to be sinners, because they do not look at themselves with the light of God's word. They cast a shade over that word, so that they cannot see clearly; or over their eyes, that they may not see at all.

The lusts of the flesh call for daily indulgence. The will that has been free to roam scorns a bridle. The impulses of nature are fondly and blindly cherished as a part of the unwritten law of God. And while there is so much bliss in ignorance, man will not be at much pains to be wise in the written law, which holds him in restraint, and calls him to account. It requires a steady look at himself, by the help of the searching light of God's Spirit, to show man his sinfulness; the same Holy One who gives comfort to the penitent, opens the eyes of the blind in sin, and shows them their guilt. He whom Christ calls the Comforter, will convince the world of sin. He came after Christ's ascension in visible shape and with mighty signs. He comes to the hearts of men now in the word of Holy Scripture, which he indited, and in

the ordinances, which he sanctifies to the believer in Christ. It is the word of God, brought home to the heart by the Holy Spirit, lodging there and probing the conscience, which makes a man know and feel that he is a sinner. He cannot know how sinful he is, but by the word of God. He may become conscious of sin, however, and yet not willing to confess it, even to himself. He resists, and tries to stifle the convictions of God's Spirit. And hence, although often warned of his sinful state, and moved towards the offered remedy for it, he who is full of spiritual leprosy, neglects the great salvation. Would that he knew its value, and knowing it, would make it his own! Happy would every one be, if he would come, like the leper, with his hand on his lips, saying, "Unclean, unclean!" O Lord, I am vile, cleanse me from my pollution. Unless he feels, and is ready to confess his sinfulness, he cannot have the benefit of the salvation which Christ has offered, to those who will be saved by him.

2dly. The sinner must have faith in Christ's power to save, and be willing to declare it. This "faith comes by hearing" of the word of God, which not only declares man's sinfulness, but also sets forth the proper atonement for sin, and the only appointed and sufficient Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God. God's holy word, written in the books of the New Testament, makes known the gracious plan of redemption, for the sinner's awakening, guidance and renewing. This word, so full of oracular teaching and spiritual comfort, must be truly believed. It must stamp the mind with a strong impression of truth, and move the heart to such feeling, as that truth demands for its proper manifestation.

The assurance of God's love, such love as was displayed in the sending his only begotten and well beloved Son, to be a sacrifice on the cross for the sinner's redemption, this divine assurance should call up in the sinner's mind, deep and searching thoughts of his need of that propitiation, and of its full sufficiency. If he believes the record, which God has given of his Son, that he is "one with the Father," "the same yesterday, to-day and forever,"—that "by him the world was made," that "he was in the beginning with God, and was God,"—that, being God, "he was manifest in the flesh, to work out the purposes of divine grace towards man,"—if he truly believes this, he has faith in Christ's

power to save. Will he declare that faith for the honour of the Saviour, and the securing of that Saviour's interposition in his behalf? If he will not, he does not honour the Saviour, or God the Father, who sent him into the world. If he will not say, "Lord, thou canst make me clean," he cannot surely trust in the Lord; he cannot therefore reasonably expect help from the Lord. He must either suppose that he can heal himself, or must be unwilling to receive the cleansing which he needs, at the cost of his pride, which scorns to avow humble dependence upon a Saviour's mediation. If he trusts to his power to cleanse himself, he must have very inadequate notions of his sin and uncleanness. It must be very far from leprosy in his own estimation. And yet, if the word of God cannot be broken, if the record which he has given be true, sin in man is as incurable as leprosy. It demands as surely the touch of a divine hand for its full cleansing. Lower views than these of the sinner's needy condition cannot be justified by the word of God. They cannot recognise the necessity of an appointed Saviour.

If, however, the leprosy of sin be felt, if the plague spot be discerned, and the dreadful consequences of its unchecked spreading be apprehended—and if, having heard of the wonder-working power of God in Christ Jesus, the sinner believes in that power, let him come to that mighty and only Saviour, and cast himself upon divine mercy, with the humble but open declaration, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean."

In making this declaration, he should bow before the Saviour in low prostration, as we proposed to show, thirdly, in humble worship of his majesty, and submission to his divine authority.

The Lord Jesus Christ is to be worshipped as God, for he is so revealed in Holy Scripture, as it has been understood from the apostles' time by the church, and so presented to us in the articles and liturgy of our branch of it. In acknowledgment of his proper divinity, we bow the head when we say in the Creed, that we believe "in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord," after professing our belief "in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth."

The incarnation of the only Son of God, for the outworking of the plan of redemption, through a sufficient expiation for sin, is plainly set forth in the assurance that "the Word of God, which was God, was made flesh," "that whosoever believeth in him

might not perish, but should have everlasting life." And the apostle of Jesus opens to our minds the revelation of the "great mystery of godliness," in the facts of redemption, to wit, "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

In the holy communion of his body and blood, we recognise our Saviour, as "both God and man," and glorify his name as the Lord, "who humbled himself to the death of the cross for our redemption." Deep and damning must be the sin which "demanded such humbling for the sacrifice of atonement!" Great, beyond the power of man to estimate, much less gratefully to return, was the love of God, which ordained and set forth that sublime mystery of the sinner's redemption, for the repentant believer's comfort and renewing!

Let the sinner come confessing his sins, and his need of pardon; declaring his faith in the power of Christ, the appointed and revealed Saviour to cleanse from sin, and worshipping him, as one who humbled himself by dwelling in the flesh for the salvation of mankind, give him glory before the world, by humble reverence of his majesty, and submission to his will. Let him give tokens of love in a willing obedience to the commands of Christ. Washed in the blood of the covenant, through faith in its divine appointment and its full efficacy, let him devoutly use the means of keeping himself clean in the sight of God. He should keep himself at Christ's feet, knit to him in the holy bonds of union, the sacraments which he has ordained. He should receive the outward washing of water, as a sign of the inward cleansing, and the bread and wine of the eucharist, as the pledge of mutual love between the Saviour and the saved, the continual nourishment of the spiritual life, bestowed through the precious offering of which they are the sacred emblems. None can partake of this holy feast, commended to them in the glowing language of our service, with a hearty response to it, without being deeply smitten with a feeling of unworthiness, and of devout gratitude to Him "who so loved us that he gave himself for us." Will any who believe it to be a high privilege, thus to bring their hungry souls to be fed by the rich bounty of their Lord, fail to come near him, when his table is spread? It is a high privilege indeed—but it is one which may be yours, my dear hearer, even that of the most hum-

ble of God's children. The lowly and the meek are the most welcome guests at the Lord's table.

Do you who mind to come have right views of this solemn ordinance? Do you look upon it as a setting forth of your Saviour's dying love, in his self-humbling sacrifice on the cross for the sinner's redemption? Do you realize the sinfulness which needs expiation by his precious bloodshedding? And with true faith in its appointed efficacy, do you thankfully receive its sacred emblems? Examine yourselves.

And you who do not come, do you feel your need of spiritual cleansing, and believe in Christ's power to cleanse, but like the leper, have some doubts of his willingness? If so, like the same leper, utter that doubt, in the very act of lowly bending to receive the gracious assurance, "I will, be thou clean." For, the same Lord who, with these words of tender mercy on his lips, stretched out his hand to heal, has said, for the encouragement of the humble seeker of his salvation, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." If, like the trembling widow, you but touch the hem of his garment, he will know and reward your faith. Or, if like Zaccheus, you climb to see the Saviour, as he scatters the blessings of his grace, you may receive such a hearty welcome as was given to him in the cheering call, "Come down, to-day I must abide at thy house." Doubt not Christ's power to save, any more than your need of his saving power. Doubt not his willingness to give you what you need. He is more willing to give, than you to ask. Linger not amid the husks of a famine-stricken place of exile, from the home of a father's ample bounty; but return, guilty and needy, but penitent and suppliant, to a love which yearns for the wanderer.

"Come, freely come, by sin oppressed,
On Jesus cast thy weighty load;
In him thy refuge find, thy rest,
Safe in the mercy of thy God."

Such tones of tender invitation are uttered in the gospel of Jesus Christ, "who came into the world to save sinners, and who has promised to give to his followers eternal life, an assured hope, and a final crown of heavenly glory." Unto the same Lord Jesus Christ, who with the Father, and the Holy Ghost together, is worshipped as one God, be all honour and glory forever. Amen.

SERMON XL.

“Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?”—LUKE XVII. 17.

As Jesus was going to Jerusalem through the confines of Samaria and Galilee, he was met at a certain village, by ten lepers, who, having heard of his fame, and being convinced of his power to heal them, besought him earnestly to have compassion on them. The disease with which they were afflicted, was contagious, loathsome, and almost incurable. It compelled them to be shut out from the society, and in a great measure from the sympathy of their fellow men, by whom they were regarded with disgust and abhorrence. Sensible, therefore, of their extreme wretchedness, and of their utter inability to help themselves, or to obtain any relief from mere human power or skill, they cried out unto him, who had healed all manner of diseases throughout the land, saying, “Jesus, master, have mercy on us!” They knew that he was able, they believed that he was willing to relieve their sufferings. Nor were they deceived or disappointed. He who healed the bodily diseases of men, that he might prepare them to receive him as a physician for their souls, promptly answered their prayer. He spake, and it was done. He used no appliances of medical skill. No intervention of any secondary causes was necessary to effect the cure. He only prescribed a single condition, suggested by his desire to observe the law of Moses, and expressed in these few words, “Go, show yourselves unto the priests.” It was required by the law, that all lepers should be pronounced clean by the priest, before they could be permitted to mingle with the congregation, and be restored to the privileges of society. Hence our Lord commanded them to show themselves to the proper judges of their case. As they

went in obedience to his command, they were cleansed from their leprosy. What a minister of mercy Jesus was to these wretched outcasts! They no longer need stand afar off, and cry, "Unclean! unclean!" to warn their fellow men to flee from a contagion so corrupting and painful. They are restored to purity, comfort, and the enjoyment of the charities and privileges of social life. Could there be a greater occasion for deep and fervent gratitude, for an acknowledgment of the divine source of the wonder-working power, and an expression of devout thanksgiving to an almighty and gracious God? Should we not reasonably expect to hear that these ten men came, striving who should be most earnest in his expression of thanksgiving to him whom God had endowed with such miraculous gifts? Yet what was their conduct on this occasion? Nine of them went their way, as if the mercy which they had received were a very common one, which they had expected as a matter of course. These were Jews. One only returned to give glory to God, and thanks to Jesus, and he was a Samaritan. He, when he saw that he was healed so soon, and so entirely, at the will of Jesus, turned back, and with a loud voice, glorified God, and fell down on his face at the feet of Jesus, giving him thanks. Well may Jesus have been surprised at the ingratitude of the others! And just was the rebuke implied by his question, as recorded by the evangelist: ("And Jesus answering said,) Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?" Where are all those Jews who owe especial praise to the God of Israel for this act of mercy? Alas! He is compelled to say, "There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger."

Brethren, do we wonder at, and condemn this conduct of the nine lepers? Are we ready to charge them with base ingratitude, and to ask where we shall find a parallel to such conduct? Ask your own hearts, if it is not a fair picture of the world. All are ready to cry out for help in time of distress. But when that distress is relieved, can one in ten be found giving thanks to God for the mercy which he has vouchsafed to grant? Are not many constantly receiving proofs of God's loving-kindness and tender mercy, who never think of the hand from which they receive them? Mankind are much disposed to regard prosperity as a matter of course, as a mere right, or else as an accident for which they owe no one thanks. They have life and health, and

all the comforts of life, constantly enjoyed, yet they never consider that it is only of God's goodness and mercy, that they are permitted to enjoy them. Do they who have an abundance of prosperity in the midst of much adversity, who see around them evidences of much suffering, of distress and anguish, to which they are strangers, (do they) show any gratitude to the Giver of all good for the mercy which has "made them to differ from their fellow men?" Are not the cases of proper estimation of God's goodness, and of gratitude for the constant expression of it, so few and rare, that it may be asked with reference to them, "Where are the nine?"

One may be found occasionally who has a deep sense of obligation to God for his manifold mercies: one pious worshipper, who falls down before the throne of grace to pour out an offering of praise and thanksgiving for that which was given unasked, or obtained in answer to a fervent petition. But the rest are unmindful of their obligations. Not only is this the case when uninterrupted prosperity is considered, but likewise when reference is made to delivery from actual misery, or from apprehended suffering in time of general calamity. Look into the city, where "pestilence has walked in darkness, and destruction has wasted at noonday." Observe the conduct of those who are spared, not only from death, but from sickness also, who have been living in peace and quietness, in the midst of general sickness, sorrow, desolation and death. How many will you find deeply sensible of their obligations to a merciful God, who has graciously protected them? How many can be pointed out, who feel grateful for their preservation, and who express their gratitude in a way that leaves no room for mistake? Many, perhaps, may say, "Thank God, we have escaped." But even if they say this reverently, they say it probably without another thought of religious obligation. How few show their sense of gratitude by a more frequent and earnest calling upon God, by a more constant and careful devotion of themselves to his service, by striving to glorify him in the life which has been spared, and to be more diligent in preparing for a life immortal in another world! One in ten may be found giving praise to God for his mercy and goodness. "But where are the nine?"

Take individual cases of persons restored to health from a state of extreme sickness, or delivered from imminent danger

of any kind. While in the midst of peril, they will cry out, like these lepers, perhaps, "Jesus, have mercy on us. Lord, hear our prayer, and let our crying come unto thee. Save us, we beseech thee, from the evil which threatens to overwhelm us."

Their prayer has been heard; God has been pleased to show his mercy and loving-kindness unto them. And now where are they? Do they lift up their voices and their hearts in thankful praise to him who has delivered them? Are they found glorifying God? Here and there may be seen one who remembers in prosperity the friend who was counted precious in adversity. But where are the others? They are absorbed in the business or pleasures of life, as unmindful of God, and as unconcerned about his favour, as if their own right arm had wrought deliverance for them. And is not their ingratitude as great as that of the lepers who were cleansed by our Saviour, and who gave him no thanks? You would readily condemn these, and wonder that any could be found so regardless of the claims of a benefactor. And perhaps you may be inclined to doubt the existence of so close a parallel as we have drawn. But look at the case again. Search your own hearts, and see if, while you condemn the lepers, (as David condemned the person who had taken his neighbour's pet lamb,) your own conscience does not reprove you, as Nathan reprov'd the self-condemned king of Israel, saying, "Thou art the man."

Consider, my hearers, how many mercies you are continually receiving at the hand of God, of which you are utterly unworthy, and for which you are utterly unthankful. You complain, perhaps, if there is any little interruption of your prosperity, if all things do not go on just as you would have them. But are you careful to acknowledge the positive blessings which you enjoy, in common with your fellow men, or even those which make your condition preferable to theirs? Do you consider how much you have more than you deserve, rather than how much you might have more than you possess? Ask yourselves as accountable beings, the acknowledged creatures of an Almighty and beneficent Creator. Ask yourselves as the professed disciples of Christ, believing his doctrines, and trusting his promises. Are you grateful for the mercies which you are constantly receiving? Do you, when the morning breaks upon your sight, and refreshed with sleep, you look out upon the sky beaming benignantly upon the earth, and upon the earth sending up its incense to the sky,

when all your senses are gladdened by the rich promise of more substantial blessings to come; do you then lift up your heart and your voice to the God who has preserved your life, and given you all these sources of enjoyment? If not, beware how you condemn the lepers. Do you realize your dependence upon the providence of God for your daily sustenance, and as you sit at your substantial repast, twice or thrice in a day, do you give thanks for that abundance which you enjoy, while so many are suffering hunger and extreme want? If not, you are liable to the charge of ingratitude, you are unmindful of your obligations.

And above all, are you duly sensible of your religious privileges? Do you, who have been taught by the revelation through our Lord Jesus Christ, the knowledge of God, and of the way of salvation, rightly esteem this knowledge? Do you prize the book of God's word, and the sanctuary in which you are permitted to worship God according to this word? Do you show that you deem it a privilege to offer praise and prayer in the midst of the congregation? And are you devoutly thankful for this privilege? If not, you may reasonably be charged with ingratitude and insensibility to divine beneficence. Instances might be multiplied, to illustrate the application of the text to the common ingratitude of mankind. But we wish now to consider it in its application to the reception of the gospel salvation.

Christ came into a world deeply infected with the foul leprosy of sin, bringing the only remedy for it which could be effectual. He taught the doctrine of eternal salvation, to be obtained by his own mediation, through sufferings and death. The blood which he shed, when he gave himself for the life of the world, was sufficient to cleanse all the world from sin, if sprinkled upon the soul, by means of faith. When He who declared that he was sent into the world, to save all who should believe in him, was lifted up on the cross, then was sealed that promise of the Father, "to give eternal life to as many as he should call." Then was the love of God made manifest, which encourages all who believe his word to cast themselves entirely upon him for salvation. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends," is the language of our Saviour in reference to his propitiatory offering of himself for all who should obey him. And when his inestimable love was shown by that most unequivocal testimony, then went forth that copious and perennial stream of purification, which enabled the Saviour to say to every soul

in this sinful world, as he said to the man filled with leprosy, "I will, be thou clean." Christ says this now, by his holy word, to every one who will receive it. The same leprous corruption pervades mankind now, as in the days of Christ's ministry, and that of his apostles. All need the grace of God, through a crucified, risen and ascended Saviour, embraced by a hearty faith, and to all is it promised and offered. The glad tidings of salvation are proclaimed in the ears, and earnestly addressed to the hearts of millions, all perishing in their sins, and needing the riches, the unsearchable riches of Christ.

But how few embrace with joy and gratitude the offer of salvation and eternal peace? Does one in ten fall down at the feet of Jesus, the divine and merciful Saviour, giving him thanks for the inestimable gift of his grace, and glorifying God for the revelation of his mystery of redemption? Can so many be found walking in all his commandments, grateful for that pardon which they have received, and striving to keep themselves from the sin which they have repented of and promised, through divine help, to forsake? But let it be granted that one in ten, (of all those sinners whom Christ exhorts to come unto him and be saved,) does come, humble and penitent, to receive forgiveness, and then lifts up his heart in grateful praise for the mercy which he acknowledges to be divine. With such a one Christ is well pleased. He looks upon him with tender compassion, mingled with approbation, and while he says to this one, "Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace," he at the same time utters the exhortation to the impenitent world, "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?"

My hearers, if any of you have not become the professed followers of Christ, you must answer this question. You are included in the class to which this exhortation is addressed by the Saviour. Let it not be addressed in vain. You have the way of salvation set before you in the gospel, read and preached, week after week; you have the promises of God freely given to you, through Christ Jesus our Lord, and you are urged to accept them for your souls' eternal well being. While you have been slighting the gospel, (so long and so earnestly preached to you,) many have gone to another world, who have enjoyed the same privileges. Some were younger than yourselves, some of your own age. But whether older or younger, they have had

their day of grace. Their doom is sealed, for their time of preparation is past. Of these departed souls, one in ten, perhaps, has gone to receive the inheritance which is promised to the faithful in Christ Jesus. "But where are the nine?"

This is an appalling question. Let the consideration of it induce you to strive earnestly to obtain that "hope which is an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast," and which cometh of faith in Jesus Christ. Let it prompt you to search your hearts, that you may discover their corruption; and feeling your need of the cleansing power of Christ's blood, may you be induced to cry out, like the poor lepers, despairing of other help, "Jesus, have mercy on us." There are other points of application in which the text may be viewed. The case of the lepers has a parallel in that of the members of the church of Christ. Of every ten who are baptized into the church, scarcely one becomes an open and consistent follower of the Lord. I mean those who are baptized in infancy, presented unto Christ by their parents, and solemnly dedicated to his service. Ten are offered unto him in this solemn rite, and should be brought up religiously, and made to adorn his doctrine by their holy lives. "But where are the nine?"

Why are all these gone astray in the world of wickedness? Can parents be sensible of their high and awful responsibilities, when they neglect to bring up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?" Can they escape the obligation to do so, even if they have not vowed to do it? And will they, who have, in the sacrament of baptism, caused their children to be received into covenant with God through Christ, and to be made partakers of the promises of Christ, suffer them to grow up, without any knowledge of their obligations, instead of teaching them the nature of the rite, and their duty to take upon themselves the vows of their sponsors, and to be faithful followers of the Saviour? There are many who, having given their children in baptism, seem to think their duty is done; that the seed is planted in the soul of the infant, which will bring forth fruit unto holiness, though no culture be bestowed upon it. Yet these very children, perhaps, are permitted to grow up to an age when they are responsible moral agents, without any instruction in religious truth. Great pains and expense are bestowed upon their education in letters and graces; great care

is taken that they shall be accomplished, that they may appear well in society, while their souls are surrendered to the dominion of sin. Indeed, they hardly know that they have souls to be saved from sin, much less that there is a way of salvation pointed out in the Bible, which it is their duty to know and to follow. Hence it is, in very many cases, the fault of the parents and guardians of baptized children, that these do not become faithful disciples of Jesus. Be careful, then, my Christian friends, lest you should be found guilty of the eternal perdition of souls committed to your care, and be pierced with many sorrows, when Christ, demanding these souls, shall say, "Where are the nine?"

There is much blame resting somewhere in the church, that so many of those who are received into her bosom by the prescribed rite of admission, disappoint her reasonable expectations. And much of it must fall upon parents, sponsors and guardians. Many of them, (would it be supposed that they could be so careless and inconsistent,) while they profess to be anxious about their own souls, and to believe that through faith in Christ only, can salvation be obtained, leave children to their own sinful propensities, and to the corrupting influence of the world, till they become firmly rooted in sin, and utterly insensible to the influence of religion, and then wonder and mourn that they are not good Christians. This may appear strange, but it is true. And oh, how strange is truth! How many are the unfaithful! How few are the faithful and devoted servants of the Lord! Of those who profess to believe in Jesus, and to be his disciples, heirs through hope, of everlasting glory through him, and therefore bound to honour and glorify him with their whole soul and body, how few live as becometh the gospel of Christ! Many have confessed their sins and implored forgiveness. They have obtained pardon and peace from Him who alone can bestow them; they are cleansed from pollution, from the leprosy of the soul. But do they turn back from the way of wickedness, and casting themselves at the feet of Jesus, glorify God for his mercy? Do they give themselves up joyfully and gratefully to his service, declaring the souls his which he has cleansed?

Much does it become us all, my brethren, to search our hearts, and prove them by the word of God, lest we be found wanting at the last; lest we be found among the number of those who,

though they cry "Lord, Lord, open unto us," will be shut out from the kingdom of Christ. So live, we pray you, through faith in Christ, and in humble dependence on his grace, that you may finally receive the testimony of your Lord, that you have been faithful servants, and are worthy of the crown of glory which he has promised to them that endure unto the end.

SERMON XLI.

“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”—JOHN
xii. 32.

THESE words were spoken by our Saviour, three or four days before his crucifixion. He had just said that it was the hour when “the Son of man,” as he called himself, “should be glorified.” And the glory referred to, was mysteriously associated with what the world counted shame and reproach. He plainly intimated that the great purpose for which he was sent into the world demanded his death, by this simple illustration: “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” “Even so, (he clearly hints,) must the Son of man die, and be cast into the earth, in order that a mighty harvest may be gathered from the world unto his heavenly Father.” While he thought on these things, he was troubled in spirit, and his natural sense of pain struggled with his desire to do the will and show forth the glory of God. His pious purpose triumphed, and he cried, “Father, glorify thy name;” he was answered by a voice from heaven, saying, “I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.” This voice came not for Jesus’ sake, as if he needed to be satisfied of this, but for the sake of the bystanders, to convince and confirm them. So Jesus told them. “This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes,”—that is, that you might believe what I tell you, and trust in me as the Son of God, and Messiah. It is time for his reign to begin, and the kingdom of Satan to be overthrown. “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” We have said that these words point to his crucifixion.

And it is very clear that they do. For St. John says directly, by way of comment, "This he said, signifying what death he should die." And the people so understood him, for they scoffed at the claims of such a Messiah. They said, in answer, "We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth forever, and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of man?"

This lifting up of the Messiah, on which his power to draw would depend, is the same which was meant by our Saviour in his discourse with Nicodemus, when he referred to the type of his propitiation, the serpent lifted up for the healing of the Israelites. That was a clear type of Christ. And our Lord said, in reference to it, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

The purport of the text then is plainly this: Christ crucified will draw all men unto himself. And it may be regarded,

1st. As a prophecy, the fulfilment of which, under circumstances which made it so unlikely to be fulfilled, affords a strong proof of the truth of Christianity. For how preposterous it seemed, that a malefactor's death, suffered by one who claimed to be the Messiah, whose dominion should be wide as the earth, and endless as eternity, should be the stepping-stone to power! Nothing that we can conceive of would, in the opinion of the world, be more fatal to the hopes of any religion, than the ignominious death of its founder. Yet upon this was Christ's prediction based: "If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me." Let me but suffer death upon the cross, as it has been appointed, and then will people of all nations flock to the standard of the cross, and worship the despised and rejected of the Jews. And this prophecy has already been sufficiently fulfilled, to establish the truth of the Christian religion. It was couched in general terms. And when all the known world became nominally Christians, when He who died as man was worshipped as God, in all the earth that was known to his persecutors, then was the text verified to an extent far beyond what could have been anticipated by any of those who heard it. But it looks farther yet for its full proof. It is a prediction and a promise of Him whose spirit is the spirit of prophecy, and whose promise never fails, that all the world shall be brought into subjection to the power of the cross. It is an assu-

rance that the kingdoms of the earth shall become the kingdoms of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all nations shall take his yoke upon them, his light and easy burden, in exchange for the galling yoke of sin and Satan. The Saviour speaks with authority and decision, but there is a voice of merciful kindness and sweet persuasion, mingled with the firm resolve. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." As the Lord God spake to his people of old, saying, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee," so Christ speaks to all mankind in words of affectionate concern, saying, "I will draw them with the cords of a man, with the bands of love."

There is a settled purpose of God to bring all the world into obedience through Christ. But there is no sternness of manner implied in the fixedness of purpose. Christ drove the defilers of the temple out of it, but he will not drive unwilling worshippers into it. No, he plainly declares that he will draw men unto him. And how shall he do this? By being lifted up on the shameful cross! Isaiah says, in reference to the Messiah, "He hath no form or comeliness—no beauty, that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men!" Who will believe the prophet's report, if Christ spake truly when he uttered the words of our text? But the prophet saw the dark side of the picture, when he described the sufferings of the Man of sorrows. He then caught a glimpse of that scene at which Christ's human nature shuddered. At other times he saw through that darkness the glory that should follow, the very triumph which awaited the crucified One, the drawing of the world to his footstool, through the power of the cross itself. Isaiah looks forward to the time when "every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess" to Christ, the Lord of all, who shall obtain the heathen for an inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession. His spirit rejoiced at the prospect of that breaking down of the kingdom of Satan—the victory of the cross of Christ, which would be marked by the casting away of idols, and the fleeing of their worshippers, like doves to their windows, to Him who was lifted up to be a standard for the gathering of the people, "the Desire of all nations."

Both sides of the prophet's picture were true. The Messiah was despised and rejected, as he himself declared that he must be, to gain that vantage ground whence he could triumph over his

enemies. He must be lifted up, that Satan might be cast down: and that all who mourned for sin, might look on him whom they had pierced, and be saved through faith. Nor was it in his person only that Christ was despised and rejected; his doctrine had been treated with like contempt. And so much was this to have been expected, that this is one of the circumstances that show how unlikely it was that the prediction of our Saviour would be fulfilled, and that made its fulfilment a striking proof of the truth of Christianity. Nothing can be conceived more repulsive to the natural heart, to man corrupt from his birth, and nurtured in selfishness, than the doctrines of the cross, (as they are called,) the truths which are connected with that of the great propitiation for sin. It is enough that men love sin, to induce a strong dislike to the doctrines of Christ.—But when we add to this the demand which the gospel makes, that men must cast away all dependence upon their own righteousness; all hope of being accepted for their own merits, and trust to the merits of the despised and crucified Jesus, we find cause enough for ceaseless opposition. And the result has been just what might have been expected. It is true—too true, that the gospel has been trodden under foot by many to whom it has been sent, although it be “the savour of life unto life” to them that believe and receive it. The doctrine of Christ crucified has been to many persons in all ages, “a stumbling-block and foolishness.” Christ’s religion has been hated and rejected of men. And, as has been well said, “It is the hatred of deformity to perfect beauty, the scowling of pride and self-righteousness upon humility and self-denial, the rancour of sensuality and worldly-mindedness against purity, and spiritual affections.” This aversion to the gospel is to be overcome by the grace which the gospel reveals; and that grace will prevail till all the world is reconciled to God. Christ will draw, by his Spirit, which enlightens and subdues, and by his cross, shown in all its attractiveness by the light of that Spirit. When God pours in a flood of light upon the soul which has long been bound by the dark chains of ignorance and sin, and reveals its guilt and its peril, and the free offering of the blood of atonement to cleanse from guilt, and the strong arm to rescue from danger, that soul is speedily loosed from its shackles, and is drawn straightway to Christ.

The gospel makes its strong and earnest appeals to all mankind,

“whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear.” To the mind darkened by the mists of ignorance, and groping in the pathless wilds of superstition and ungodliness, Christ is presented “as the way, the truth, and the life.” To the restless spirits, who, weary of the world and all its vain and transitory joys, utter the despairing cry, “Who will show us any good,” the Saviour offers “the bread of life,” the joys that never fade, saying, “He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.” To the awakened and contrite sinner, who has a bitter sense of his unworthiness and his estrangement from God, who feels the strong grasp of the enemy holding him in sin, and groaning under the weight of guilt heaped upon his soul, “looks upward and around, but finds no other deliverer,” the gospel exhibits Christ crucified, and cries, “Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world.”

Thus does Christ draw men unto himself, by the offer of pardon and mercy to the guilty transgressor, made by one mighty to save, and by the precious promises of spiritual and eternal joys, the glorious fellowship of a joint inheritance with him in the kingdom of God.

We have viewed the text as a prediction that was not likely to be fulfilled, (as men would generally suppose,) because the death of its founder on the cross was not a very obvious mode of propagating a new religion, even if not very objectionable in itself. And we have regarded its fulfilment as greatly opposed by the natural repugnance of the mind to the doctrines of the cross. Yet we cannot but consider the words of our Saviour as declaring the necessary influence of his crucifixion upon the heart roused into quick perception by the Holy Spirit. For how can perishing, hopeless man, quickened by divine influence to a lively sense of his peril and misery, fail to be moved by an exhibition of such mercy and love?

Who would not be moved by the deep workings of gratitude towards a fellow being, who had interposed himself with generous self-devotion, between him and death? How much more resistless should be the appeal of Christ crucified, who relinquished his divine honour and dignity, in behalf of those who had despised that honour and offended that dignity, and in human nature suffered the pangs of a cruel death to rescue them from eternal wo! How

deep was the humiliation displayed in the sacrifice for man's redemption, we know not; we cannot fathom it. We only know that it challenges the deepest gratitude—the most burning love that we can show.

How great was the pain endured for us we can only estimate by the awful shudder of his assumed humanity, and the strong cry that the bitter cup might be taken away. Can then the heart of a truly awakened sinner refuse to pour itself out at the foot of the cross, on which the incarnate Word was lifted up? No. It cannot be. When the veil of unbelief is torn away, and the cross stands revealed in all its power of attraction; when the heart once enslaved by sin is set free by the Holy Spirit, and is able to discern its deliverer, then will it be drawn to Christ, in fulfilment of his prophetic declaration in our text. But the power which Christ asserts as the effect of his crucifixion, will not, of course, be displayed in the case of every individual. We know that many steel their hearts against its influence, and are lost. And this we had reason to expect, for while our Lord spake in general terms, of the hold which his doctrines would take of the world at large, he often mourned over the recklessness which would plunge many into hopeless ruin. The power to save, to heal and to comfort, may be declared to many who will not embrace it. The wicked may not see their guilt and feel their condemnation, and so may not prize the blood which cleanses, and the righteousness which justifies. The diseased, that are full of moral leprosy, may believe themselves whole, and therefore think they have “no need of a spiritual physician.” They who are borne down by sorrow, may plunge into the gulf of maddening pleasure, or apply the cold remedies of a chilling philosophy, and finding no relief, refuse to be comforted by religion, doubting its power.

All this may be, and yet Christ be no vain pretender. He is the power of God unto salvation to all who will believe in him. May you, my hearers, know his power. If you are blind in heart and cannot see the cross, pray for the light of God's Spirit to show it you. If you are proud in heart, and will not bow to the cross, be humbled by the reflection that you will be judged by Him who bore it. And whether blindness, pride, or wickedness, keep you aloof from Christ, the time will come when you will be drawn unto him with a strong arm of vengeance, in the day of

final retribution. Yes, there is one sense in which the text will be fulfilled to the very letter. At his second coming to judge the world, Christ will draw all men around his throne. There all will meet in the presence of his awful majesty. The wretched heathen who never heard of Christ on earth—the still more wretched being who would be heathen in spite of Christ, the proud philosopher who coldly speculated upon his claims, the self-complacent Pharisee, who “had no need of Christ’s righteousness,” and the poor contrite sinner who clung to it as to the skirts of his garment—all shall veil their faces before him who was lifted up from the earth, that he might draw all men unto him. If then, hearer, you do not help to fulfil Christ’s prophecy in this life, you will be compelled to do so in the life to come. If you are not drawn by his saving grace, you will be drawn by his arm of vengeance. Yield to his power now. Consent to be drawn within the circle of his redeeming love. We ask it of all, who are yet far from him. And we pray for all to whom we preach Christ crucified, that they may give him glory. We pray to him seated on that throne to which he was lifted up by the cross, that he may draw us unto him in life, that we may be drawn more closely to him in death, and may not fear to be drawn unto him, mid the assembled world for final judgment. May we be prepared to meet him at that judgment, and thence forever sing in concert with archangel voices, that praise which in feebler strains we now ascribe.

SERMON XLII.

“A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterwards he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not.”—MATTHEW xxi. 28, 29, 30.

THE Holy Scriptures were evidently designed to be of use in all ages of the world, and to suit the condition of man always, so long as he should be what he has been ever since the fall of Adam—corrupt and sinful—rebellious against God. And it becomes us to apply to ourselves, and our own age, whatever instruction or warning, given to those first addressed by our Lord and his apostles, will admit of a general application. Called, as our Saviour was, to rebuke the vices and follies of his own people, and compelled, as he was, to expostulate with the teachers among them, for their wilful blindness and obstinacy of spirit, he gave to many of his parables, which would reach classes of men in every age, a pointedness of special application, which they who heard him could not but feel and regard as meant particularly for them. The primary and local application of the figurative discourse, which he commonly employed, which should always be recognised, may serve to give point to the general truths, in which all who read are concerned. Hence the parables of our Lord are found to be most instructive, as well as interesting portions of Holy Scripture, to people of every nation, and under all the different phases of society.

The parable before us has its special and local—as well as its general application. Our Lord evidently aimed a barbed arrow at the chief priests and elders, who, in the exercise of their abused authority, had grown wanton, and who hated reproof.

This will appear from a brief view of the circumstances of the case. These rulers had challenged the authority of Jesus to teach and work as a prophet. Jesus, instead of plainly declaring who gave him authority, chose to confound them by a question about John Baptist: "The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?" These time-servers were sorely puzzled. They were afraid to answer; for if they should say, From heaven, he would say, Why then did ye not believe him? But if they should say, Of men, they feared the people, who regarded John as a prophet sent from God. And they could not afford to lose their power over the people. They therefore answered, "We cannot tell whence it was." Jesus replied, "Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things. But what think ye?" And having put to them the parable of the two sons, he said, "Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily, I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not. But the publicans and the harlots believed him; and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterwards, that ye might believe him."

Here he brings the parable home to them. They, who professed to love and obey God, to seek the coming Messiah, and to honour him, but who had despised his forerunner, were the second son, who said he was going, but went not; while the other classes of whom obedience was not so much to be expected, were the first son, who at first refused to go, but afterwards repented, and went.

This was the primary application. There may have been a secondary one, to Jew and Gentile, as subjects of divine grace, contrasted with respect to their reception of salvation through Christ, the whole Jewish nation being represented by the second son, while the whole Gentile world was designated by the first. But these were only temporary references. There is point in the parable for those of every nation to whom the word of God has come. There are always in the world two classes of persons, to whom the text will apply with full force, in reference to the church of Christ. Our divine Redeemer says always by his ministers, to every one of the children of God, for whom he died, "Son, go work to-day in my vineyard." We propose to consider particularly,

1st. The command of our Lord—its meaning and force.

2dly. Its different reception by different classes of men.

In considering the command, we shall view it in three aspects.

1. Where the son is directed to go—into the vineyard of the Lord.

2d. What he is to do there—to work.

3d. When he is to go—to-day.

We observe, first, that the son is commanded to go into his father's vineyard. According to the prevailing use of this word in the parables of both the Old and the New Testament, we are to understand our Lord as designating by it, his church on earth. This beautiful image is used by the prophets, who foretold the coming of our Lord, as well as by our Lord himself. The church, Jewish and Christian, is described as the vineyard which Jehovah has planted.

Isaiah (v.) sings of the vineyard which the Lord had planted and fenced, and carefully tended; "And he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel." Israel was then the church of God. Our Saviour gives a parallel illustration to this, in a parable directly following that which we have set before us in our text. "A certain householder planted a vineyard, and let it out to husbandmen. And at harvest time, he sent his servants to receive the fruits of it; but they were treated ill and rejected. Then he sent his son, whom they killed." "What will the Lord of the vineyard do to those husbandmen?" says our Saviour to the Jews. They answered, "He will destroy them, and let out the vineyard to others," who will give him the fruits. Jesus then said, "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Here Christ defines the term "vineyard of the Lord:" it is his kingdom or church. He follows the same figurative style of speaking, when he calls himself the vine, and his disciples the branches. "I am the vine—ye are the branches." The vineyard is hedged and enclosed; and the church, for which it stands, has its boundaries, its marks, and its guards. It is a visible, well defined, regularly governed society, instituted by Christ himself, and living only through him. Into this sacred enclosure, within this fold of the one great and

good Shepherd, all the sons of Adam are invited to come. They are called severally, as God's children, "Son, go into my vineyard." There is room for all—and Christ yearns for all—for each individual wanderer in the world of sin and misery. Men cannot serve God acceptably out of it. Grace, at its first flowing, made a channel in which it must always run. Man being born in sin, and doomed to moral, as well as natural death thereby, can be rescued from his miserable and perilous condition, only by almighty power. And the God who is the only source of relief, is the sovereign disposer of it. Salvation being of gift, can only be had according to promise. But though the promise is a sure dependence, we must take it in its strictness. And although we may choose between different devices of men, we must cling to the letter of the promise, if there be nothing but God's promise to sustain us. He, therefore, who founds his hope of salvation on revelation, will wisely build it within the limits of the church. He will go into the Lord's vineyard. We say, then, to those who seek salvation, Go into the vineyard. Place yourselves in connexion with what claims to be a branch of the one holy apostolic church. Be not satisfied with any communion of recent and avowedly human origin, for no man can, of his own wisdom and authority, establish a connexion with Christ. No man can restore a broken link in the sacred chain. And he who derides what is called apostolical succession, derides the wisdom of God in the perpetual derivation of the sure privileges of union with Christ. We say, then, let no one be satisfied until he is in communion with what claims to be, at least, a branch of the one church of Christ. Whoever would work out his salvation, must do it, with the help of God's grace, flowing in its appointed channel. Go, then, work in the Lord's vineyard. Ah! here is a great stumbling-block. Men will work and strive to build up a tower of self-righteousness that shall reach to heaven. They will follow their own devices, and work any where but where God has commanded—reserving to themselves that dear privilege of doing as it may please them. Some will work to make a church as good as Christ's, or better, as some profanely talk, because newer. Others will work without any pretended church bond—boasting of their independence. Independence of the authority and grace of their Creator and Redeemer! But the command of that Re-

deemer is, secondly, "Go, work in my vineyard."—And here we notice, under the second point of our text, the proneness of mankind to divide God's command in both ways. Some will be contented to work, but not in the vineyard, while others go into the vineyard, but not to work. They choose to slumber and sleep there. They would eat of the fruit of the vineyard without labour. But this cannot be. By the sweat of his brow man was doomed to live, after he fell. And even in the midst of his privileges of grace, under the new covenant, he bows to the same universal mandate—for he is required to work in his Lord's service, as a redeemed being, a servant bought with blood.

Under the system of redeeming grace, Christ has all the merit of salvation. Man helps by way of condition. The works which he does, in and through faith in Christ, are the only works that God will pronounce good. And it is only by such works that faith can be proved true. Righteousness before God, is moral purity exhibited as the fruit of faith, and to the glory of Christ. This is religion as induced by revelation, distinguished from the religion of the untaught mind—which is either superstition, or self-righteousness. And this is the requirement of the Lord, in the command, "Go, work in my vineyard." Thirdly. When does the command take effect? Is man at liberty to choose his own time for serving the Lord, in the way of his appointment? Can the sinner sit at ease, in the courts of worldliness and iniquity, till the last hour of life, and then slide into the safe enclosure where grace awaits him, with her comforts and her triumphs? The gospel nowhere encourages such supineness and such confidence. And the text bids him take a different course. "Son, go, work *to-day* in my vineyard." "*Now* is the accepted time," is the stirring note of the word of God. And life may have its end to-day. Even if man could safely trust to coming years for working time, under the teaching of experience, the word of God gives no counsel for the morrow. All its warnings bid us live, as if there were no morrow.

How vain the confidence which leads the young, or the mature, to wait for old age, as the fit season to prepare for another world! Where is the mature sinner that is not hardened in sin, or the old one, that does not find enough of care and employment to shut out religion? But even if it were not so, man's duty of repentance begins at the very moment when the gospel call first

reaches him. To every man, woman, and child, able to understand the appeal, the voice of God speaks with authority and with kindness, "Go, work to-day in my vineyard." To this voice of command and entreaty, sinners give a different answer, as characterized by the two sons. Some say positively, We will not. Obstinate wicked, they defy the authority of God, and spurn the dominion of Christ. "We will not have this man to reign over us." We will live after our own way, indulging all our desires. What care we for future penalties? We know nothing of another world. Give us free scope in this. There are many who say this in their hearts, who live as if they were sure of escaping that wrath of God, from which the Scriptures warn them to flee. All who live in the practice of gross wickedness, while the call to repentance is sounded in their ears, do truly resemble the first son, in his prompt and bold refusal, "I will not."

But there are others, who virtually say the same, while they profess to be willing to serve God. These are they who seek to establish their own righteousness; who, having a respect for good morals, and a disposition to honour the revelation of God through Christ, without appearing to yield to what they are pleased to call "delusion," adopt the Christian code, but reject Christian doctrines. They respect the moral law, because it seems to them to be wholesome; it accords with their reason. But they refuse that submission of themselves to the will of God, which faith implies and demands, reserving to themselves an independent will. God says to each of them:—"Son, enter my vineyard, and there work out your salvation, with fear and trembling. Come into covenant with me through Christ, and with the help of grace therein bestowed, strive to glorify me by works of righteousness."

The answer is:—"I can work out my own salvation through my own will and power, without submitting to a system whose fitness I cannot discern; I plant my own vineyard; I am my own church."

Thus do both classes furnish a parallel to the case of the rebellious son, who said, "I will not." But do they imitate him in his subsequent repentance? Alas! would that all did! Of one among the multitude of rebels, it may be occasionally said, "But afterwards he repented and went." But the many continue impenitent and self-willed. God speaks to them by his holy word,

read and expounded in the church, day after day, for many years; Son, go work to day in my vineyard; but the word is still unheeded. He appeals to one and another by his providences, smiting them with the rod of mercy in affliction; but the heart, half broken, utters its faint cry, "I will not;" and the doomed one, though often warned, goes a rebel to the grave. Merciful God, let not the hoary head, that thou hast smitten in love, be wagged in derision, or proudly raised to defy thy stroke! But may it be said of every aged sinner; yea, of every one who has often refused to do thy bidding, that "afterwards he repented, and went" to work in thy vineyard.

Who are they, that may be likened to the second son, who said, "I go, sir; and went not?" Of these there are two classes. First, they who promise future repentance, but never keep their promise. When bidden to go to-day into the vineyard, they say, not to-day, but to-morrow. They either deceive themselves into a hope of final salvation, through a half formed resolution to seek it earnestly, by and by, when they have more leisure for such employment, or stifle their conscience, and drown its stirring appeals. But how perilous is the condition of both classes! "Who can tell what shall be on the morrow?" even if the purpose to improve it be formed. And how feeble is the hope for that sinner, who drowns the cry of an alarmed conscience with the promise, "I will heed the warning to-morrow." Every day has its snares, as well as its warnings. The hum of business; the luring solicitations of pleasure; the music of the world's flattering praise; the deadening influence of indolent habit; all present great hinderances to the work of repentance through faith in Christ, all oppose the decisive step to the vineyard of the Lord. Many are they who, under various temptations, place themselves in the position of that deceitful and deceived son, who said, "I go, sir; and went not."

2. But there is another class, who must not escape our notice. They are those, who, from various motives, and with different degrees of faith in God's word, attach themselves to the church, but seem to be satisfied with being in the fold of the great Shepherd. They are dead members of Christ, having "the form of godliness without the power." Wishing to serve the Lord at the least expense to themselves; hoping to enjoy his protection, with-

out sharing his reproach; they have placed themselves within the ark of safety, but have done nothing to show forth the praise of their deliverer. Being in the church by birth and early baptism, (not of their own choice,) they may only not have cast away their birthright. Or coming to baptism in mature life, and thereby claiming a share in Christ's covenant, they may have gone no further. Or having ratified their vows in confirmation, they may have turned their backs upon the holy feast of Christ's body and blood. In either case they who have thus acted, have said severally, "I go, sir; but went not." They have staid with the worldly and irreligious, instead of going heartily into the service of the Lord. So, too, we may note others, who outwardly comply with all the ordinances and institutions of the church, thereby professing entire obedience to the divine command; but who show none of the fruits of faith in their temper and conversation. These are satisfied to say, "The temple of the Lord are we," although the temple may be full of uncleanness. Or they may sing the praises of Zion, while they do nothing to build up its walls. The lukewarm, idle, and dreaming Christians, who show no zeal for the truth, no love of godliness; these, who wear the badge of Christ, but know nothing of the Christian warfare; soldiers dressed for parade, but who cannot use the armour of God; all such church members, are well represented by the son, who said, "I go, sir; and went not."

Now to all these we put the close question, how will you stand before the Lord, when he comes to call his own to their reward? "Ye are my disciples, if ye do whatsoever I have commanded you." This is his own test of religious profession. And he sounds a fearful note of warning to all negligent professors, when he says that many will say unto him at the last day, "Lord, Lord," to whom he will reply, "Depart from me, I never knew you."

A few words, by way of application of the whole subject, will close our discourse. The command of our Lord to each one of you, my hearers, is precisely that of the man in the parable put forth by him, (as in the words of our text,) "Go, work to-day in my vineyard." If you are yet a stranger to the covenant of grace, still out of the pale of the church; unbaptized with the outward element of Christ's holy sacrament; to you the word says:—"Repent and

be baptized for the remission of sins;" to-day, while you have life, and health, and strength, lest God forsake you in the hour of sickness and death. Do it now, for "now is the day of salvation." The call of the gospel is a call to individuals; to you, whoever you may be, that are old enough to know its meaning. It has been made to you ever since you could understand it. You cannot evade the responsibility which it throws upon you. Neither can you escape the penalty which will be the doom of the scorner.

If you think that you can safely do without the grace of God in Christ Jesus, you either make the Scriptures a lie, or you charge God with folly. Whether you defy God in your wickedness, or mock him with your self-righteousness, you will equally come short of salvation. Think not to please God with any work of your own device, done without the vineyard which he has hedged and planted. There is no promise of salvation to any not within the church, though they profess otherwise to live by faith. There is surely no hope for any who have not faith in Christ. We know nothing of grace, but by revelation. And what comes by promise can only be had as it is promised. If, then, you would have the assurance of pardon, go into the vineyard or church, and there you will find it. Take it as it is given of God, and bless him that he has given it on any terms.

Brethren in the Lord, already in the vineyard, consider your calling. The gospel has for you a daily summons. It is that of a master calling a servant to his daily work. Christ has bought you with his precious blood, and demands your continual service. But the service which you render is not for the Master's gain, but chiefly your own, though to his glory. Your salvation is your work, in and through Christ the Redeemer, with the help of the Holy Spirit, pledged in the sacraments. As branches of the vine, you are to grow in holiness, nourished by him through whom you live. Or, to change the figure a little, you are a part of the vineyard which, as labourers with Christ, you are bound to till. Your faithfulness will be your glory. For as you grow to a likeness to your Lord and Saviour, you will have the sure proof that you are doing the work which he has given you to do, and will also have the rich foretaste of that blessedness which will be yours in his kingdom above.

May the time soon come, when all who are here present, will throng around the sacred board, where the elements which he has consecrated, as memorials of his body and blood, offered in sacrifice for our redemption, are received as pledges of his pardoning mercy, and of our sincere faith and devotion to his service. We ask it for Christ's sake, our only Redeemer.

SERMON XLIII.

“Sir, we would see Jesus.”—JOHN XII. 21.

SUCH was the request made by “certain Greeks” who went up to Jerusalem to worship at the feast of the passover. A like request may be made by any who desire to become familiar with the history and character of Jesus, who with their mind’s eye would look at him and scan his lineaments, the strong features which mark him as a Saviour. And it would be a delightful office, surely, to present the Lord and Saviour to any humble, earnest inquirer. When, therefore, the sinner comes to the preacher of saving truth, wishing to know what the Lord can do for his soul, he may be regarded as seeking Jesus and asking for him, more earnestly indeed, than any who sought a view of his person, or an opportunity to hear him speak. And we may go still further in our application of the text. For we have a right to conclude that all who worship in the temple consecrated to the service of God in Christ, desire to know the Lord Jesus, or at least expect to hear the faithful preaching of his word. With a very little accommodation, then, our text may be taken as the virtual demand of a professedly Christian people, coming before a Christian minister in the Lord’s sanctuary. They may be supposed to say to him, with different degrees of interest, according to their several religious states, “Sir, we would see Jesus.” Friends and fellow worshippers, would you see Jesus? Come and see. Follow that band of magians, or “wise men from the east,” who are guided by a star on the way to Bethlehem. The star stands over the stable of an inn, where, cradled in a manger, lies a new-born child. There is a wonder here! See these Heaven-directed travellers prostrating themselves be-

fore him and offering him gifts of homage, "gold, frankincense, and myrrh."

You see no marks of royalty about the child, nothing to prompt you to bow in reverence. The mother bears no pomp or splendour. The place of her abode is a mean one, and all things round her mark the lowest humility. All is in keeping with the honest poverty and lowliness of the carpenter, Joseph of Nazareth, all but the veneration of the magians and their royal gifts. What manner of child is this? Would you know surely? Go to yonder field in "the country nigh unto Bethlehem," and mark that group of shepherds, who watch their flocks by night. A blaze of unwonted light surrounds them. They gaze in silent wonder at a heavenly vision. What descending form fills them with fear and quaking? It is an angel of the Lord. Is he a messenger of wrath or of mercy? Harken to his message. "Fear not," that is a tone of mercy, "fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour who is Christ the Lord." Then pealed a chorus from the heavenly hosts, of "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good-will towards men."

Who is this new-born Saviour, thus heralded by angels? Where lies he in befitting state? In a royal chamber? No. "This shall be a sign unto you," said the angel to the shepherds: "Ye shall find the babe lying in a manger." No wonder, now, that the magians worshipped the child and did him homage, since the angels of God proclaimed him the world's Saviour. Some marks of early wisdom may be looked for in one so designated. Would you see them? "Come and see" the child Jesus, but twelve years old, "sitting in the temple at Jerusalem, hearing and questioning the doctors of the law." The people are astonished at his answers. Well may they be. For when his earthly parents complained that by staying behind he had caused them to seek him sorrowing, he asserts his high mission, and heavenly origin. "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" "He grew in wisdom and in stature," subject for many years to parental authority, at home. "But Mary kept all these sayings in her heart," with a mother's trusting fondness. Behold the same Jesus, thirty years old, coming to his forerunner John, to be baptized. Mark with what reverent shrinking,

John receives him! how he would repel the approaching Saviour. John had been sent from God as a herald of the Saviour, had preached repentance and baptism, to prepare the way for one mightier than himself, who would baptize with the Holy Ghost. And now, when the mighty Saviour comes to him to be baptized, he exclaims, "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" But the meek and lowly Jesus, (who came to be a pattern of obedience,) assured him that God's institutions must be honoured, and submitted to the baptism of the forerunner, as he afterwards required submission to his own rite of baptism.

Come and see the Saviour now; see the self-humbling One crowned with glory! Behold Jesus receiving baptism at the hands of one inferior to himself! Yet see the Spirit descending from the opening heavens like a dove upon him, and hear the voice from above, saying, "Thou art my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." He is now set apart for the ministry which he so perfectly fulfilled. Behold him passing through Judea, preaching the glad tidings of eternal life. He speaks parables by the wayside, teaching the nature of the dispensation of grace, the kingdom or reign of heaven. Hear him in the temple, saying, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me." "God so loved that world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but should have everlasting life." Hear how he calls the weary and heavy-laden, saying, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." To him come the afflicted in body, and at his command, the blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk, and the lepers are cleansed. To him come the mourners for consolation under bereavement. Look! how the Lord weeps with the sorrowing sisters, bereaved of their brother Lazarus! Hear how he comforts the mourners! "Thy brother shall rise again." "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." This assurance is for all who mourn. But it was proved in the case of these sisters. He goes with them to the grave of their brother; he commands that the stone be rolled away from the mouth of the sepulchre. He speaks with the voice of divine authority, and the dead comes forth to life again.

Pause and contemplate Jesus in that solemn scene. Strange contrast! now, weeping in human sympathy with the bereaved;

now, with divine authority, bidding the dead arise and come forth! What cannot such a Saviour do? Can the fierceness of man's wrath have power to harm him? Shall he on whose brow sits majesty divine, and at whose word the bursting tomb gives up its dead to life, shall he too grace the triumph of the grim monarch? Yes! for a time, this wonder must be seen. And how is this? Can he save others who cannot save himself? Hear him speak for himself. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that all who look unto him may be saved. He must be delivered into the hands of the chief priests and scribes, and be crucified, and the third day he shall rise again." Thus it seems his death was necessary to accomplish the object of his mission. But he has power to take again the life which he is about to lay down: so he says to his disciples. And (he adds) "I give my life a ransom for many." Would you know what that ransom is? Come and see the Saviour at his last supper with his disciples. He is betrayed by one of the twelve. He has kept the last passover. And now he institutes a rite to be observed in perpetual remembrance of him. He breaks bread and blesses it, and gives it to his disciples, saying, "Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you." And he takes the cup and blesses it, and gives it to them, saying, "Drink ye all of it, for this is my blood which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins." Now we see what that ransom is, of which he spoke, and for which he would give his life. It is a ransom from bondage to sin, and from eternal death, which is the penalty of sin.

Would you see Jesus in a moving attitude? Behold him there in the midst of his chosen disciples, prefiguring his own death, (which was soon to take place,) and commanding them as they loved him, to keep that rite in remembrance of his voluntary self-sacrifice. How well could he claim obedience on the score of gratitude! "Greater love hath no man than this," says the benevolent One, "that a man lay down his life for his friends." "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." Who can resist such an appeal? Christian worshipper, have you resisted it? Would you see Jesus in his sorrows? Come into the garden of Gethsemane and mark how the flesh bleeds at every pore in this deep struggle! Hear the crying of the weaker nature! "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass

from me;" and the meek expression of his o'er-mastering spirit of submission, "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done!" Come now to the judgment hall of Pontius Pilate. See how the sufferer bears the buffetings and cruel mockings! "Being reviled, he reviled not again." He opens not his mouth in complaint, but bears all reproach without a murmur. He speaks not, but to avow that his enemies could have no power over him, if it were not given them of God, to promote his vast designs. Would you see the Lamb of God offered as a sacrifice for sin? Draw near to the cross on Calvary's mount. "It is finished." His warfare is accomplished. He whose birth the herald angels told "as tidings of great joy," mid the glad shouts of heavenly hosts, now bows his head upon the cross in bitter agony, crying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!"

Mark the testimonies of this scene of wonder! This mid-day darkness! This quaking of the earth! It is the sublime confession that the incarnate God has paid the ransom, and Satan's power is broken. Behold the temple veil rent in twain! It tells of the power of God unto salvation, to the Gentile as well as the Jew, "making of twain one new man." These wonders show, that he who "was led as a Lamb to the slaughter," had power to take again the life which he so meekly laid down; and declare with the astonished centurion at the foot of the cross, "Truly this was the Son of God!" Behold him now, sinner, lifted up for the salvation of all who will believe in him. See the sharp nails which tear his hands and his feet! Your sins have pointed them. See the spear wound in the Saviour's side, and the blood flowing from a heart that bleeds for sinful man! Impenitent sinner, come view the cross! Read its lesson, and feel its power. What does it tell of Christ? Does it not declare that whilst in him is plenteous redemption, there is no salvation out of him? In Christ crucified, you see mercy unlimited, but awful; forgiveness wide as the universe, but terrible. Look on Him who died that you might live; and be reconciled unto God. You have seen Jesus offering the great sacrifice for man's redemption, would you see that sacrifice accepted? Behold him on the third day coming from the open sepulchre! Death could not hold him. He died for our sins, and rose again for our justification. He submitted to death that he might destroy him that had the power of death. To the true believer

this is a joyful sight, the Redeemer standing upon the earth, in the same body which was laid in the rich man's tomb, a mighty victor arrayed in the spoils of the spoiler, and proclaiming the ransom of all death's captives. "Come, see the place where the Lord lay!" Here lie the habiliments of the buried one. But he is not here. No, yonder in the garden, he talks with the weeping Mary!

Behold him at evening, in the midst of his disciples, showing them his pierced hands and wounded side, to satisfy them of his identity. He appears to them again and again. He eats with them, and forty days was he on earth in company with them, speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, opening their minds that they might understand the Scriptures, and preparing them for the coming of the Holy Ghost. Behold him now ascending in a cloud to heaven, from the midst of his gazing disciples! They gaze long and silently, till they are roused by a vision of angels, and a voice saying, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

Would you see Jesus, and rejoice to see him, when he shall come again, in the clouds of heaven, to judge the world? Then look upon him, with true faith, in all the scenes of his life and death. Call on him in penitence, and pray to be pardoned by his grace. Confess him in the ordinances of baptism and the supper. Obey his commandments, and show his heavenly spirit in your temper and conversation. Bear in mind the great object of his mission, the purchase of his humiliation and sufferings. Especially behold him on the altar of sacrifice, and look up to him for salvation. For he will come once more, to judge the world. And then we ask not if you would see him, for every eye shall see him, even those that asked not for him, and sought him not, yea, even those that pierced him.

Prepare, then, for the second advent! Behold, he comes with majesty. Archangels veil their faces before the brightness of his glory. The universe dissolves at his coming. The heavens are unrolled as a scroll. The pent up fires that oft shook the earth, now burst in floods of flame from their close prison and rend the fabric of this globe. The elements melt with fervent heat. And now a cry is heard from the midst of chaos. It

is the cry of anguish from the vexed souls of the unredeemed. They call on the mountains, "Fall on us," and on the rocks, "Cover us." Let us not see the face of the Redeemer whom we have despised. But they cry in vain. They shall see him. They that have scorned to look on his sufferings and his shame, shall behold the brightness of his glory and the awful majesty of his tribunal.

In life, men have a choice to look unto Christ or not. But after death comes the judgment, and that terrible revealing which none can escape. God shield thee, sinner, from the wrathful look of the glorified Jesus! God give you grace to call yourself by the name of the Lord, to look to him for salvation, clinging to his robe of righteousness, and rejoicing in the hope of glory through him alone. We speak to all.

Spend your life on earth in seeking the way to eternal life in heaven. Cling to the gospel of grace. Behold your Saviour there. See him with the eye of faith, in his holy incarnation, in his meek and holy life, in his cross and passion, his precious death, his glorious resurrection and ascension; and so live in the practice of godliness, bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit, that at his second coming in glorious majesty, when you must see him, you may behold your Advocate with the Father, your blessed and eternal Redeemer. Amen. "Now unto him who loved us and gave himself for us, be all honour and glory, might, majesty and dominion, forever and ever. Amen."

SERMON XLIV.

"I will; be thou clean."—LUKE v. 13.

THIS was the prompt and gracious reply, which our Lord made to the miserable leper who desired to be healed. This afflicted outcast from society, being "full of leprosy," as the evangelist describes him, a disease as loathsome as it was incurable; seeing Jesus, whose divine power had doubtless frequently been displayed before him, fell on his face, and besought him, saying, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." He does not distrust the power of Jesus, but only his willingness. He felt conscious of great pollution, such as debarred him from the privileges of social intercourse, and even from the sympathies of his fellow-beings, and he could not help feeling somewhat fearful, that Jesus too might shrink from a wretch so vile, and leave him to perish by a wasting disease. He knew that Jesus was by birth and education subject to the law of Moses, and might, therefore, reasonably be supposed to regard with abhorrence, one so deeply tainted with an impurity which the law required all to avoid, and from which it guarded the people by the most rigid enactments. So that he must have come, trembling and afraid, to cast himself in the dust before a mighty Deliverer, whose power he readily acknowledged, but whose will he did not dare fully to trust. With his face buried in the dust, as if ashamed of the pollution from which he sought to be cleansed, he cries out beseechingly, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Jesus felt the force of the appeal thus made to his sympathy, and prompt to show that he was willing as he was able, to relieve the distress which no other person could, or would relieve, he put forth his hand, and touched

the leper, saying with a voice of divine authority, "I will, be thou clean." Now, in this case, the poor suppliant acknowledged his vileness, and the power of Jesus to restore him to purity—the willingness only of the Great Physician was doubted, and that because of the greatness of his pollution. And the merciful Saviour, being always ready to relieve the distressed, and satisfied with the leper's acknowledgment of uncleanness, and of faith in his power, soon removed all cause for the only distrust (which the leper) manifested, by an expression of his willingness, accompanied by the act of power which had been desired. Now, this, and every act of Jesus, showing his power to work miracles, was performed for the ultimate purpose of convincing the world into which he came, of his power to forgive sins. This we may infer from his language in a particular case, when the Pharisees charged him with blasphemy, because he presumed to forgive the sins of the paralytic. Jesus replied, "Which is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Arise, take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed and walk." The paralytic was immediately cured. Now this, in other words, means plainly, that the working of such a miracle was sufficient evidence, that he could do all that he claimed authority to do, and that a pretension so bold as that which he had set up, viz., that he could forgive sins, was well supported. The cure of the leper then was designed to show the power of Jesus to cleanse the soul, as well as the body, from pollution. And the circumstances of the case afford a good illustration of the mode of obtaining the merciful aid of a spiritual Deliverer.

Taking this leper as a fit representative of the sinner, who in the sight of God, is as fully tainted with moral corruption, as the leper was with bodily disease, we may learn the course which he should pursue to obtain pardon of the Saviour. The sinner must first be conscious of his defilement, and willing to confess it.

The world is full of sin—every man born into it needs redemption. He is so corrupt from his birth, that as soon as he becomes capable of discerning between good and evil, that is, as soon as he becomes a moral agent, and accountable to God for his conduct in life, he commits sin, and incurs guilt. This is a truth

which men are slow to believe. It is hard to convince the world of sin, so hard that we might be prepared to expect the declaration of the Saviour, that to do this, is the office of the Holy Spirit. The influence of Him who is the Comforter of the penitent believer, is required to open the mind of the sinner, and to show him that whereof he must repent. And this is the only good reason which can be given, for the general indifference which is manifested on the subject of the soul's salvation. The heart of man is so unwilling to acknowledge its corruption, that the motions of God's Spirit are constantly and obstinately resisted, instead of being encouraged and improved. Hence the work which he designs and offers to do, for the spiritual welfare of the sinner, is not done, and the sinner remains unconvinced. Yet it might be supposed, that any who could be persuaded to believe in the New Testament at all, would be easily made sensible of sin. For, if there be any truth in the Christian revelation, it is surely true, that the whole world is guilty in the sight of God, and can have no hope of acceptance with him, but through the merits of the Author of this revelation. If there be any real ground for the belief, that by the mission of Jesus Christ, life and immortality were brought to light, a future judgment, and a life of retribution according to that judgment, were revealed; if there be any ground for believing these things,—then, on the same authority, we must believe that all men have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, and can be justified only through his grace, by the merits of the sacrifice of Christ. Indeed it is the burden of all Scripture, from Genesis to the Revelation of St. John, that “the sins of man have separated him from his heavenly Father.” We come before the Lord in our solemn service, with the reading of such declarations of Scripture. We hear the words of the prophet, saying, “To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him;” the voice of the psalmist, saying, “Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified;” and that of the apostle of Jesus, declaring even to the believer in his Lord, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” None of us can deny, or have any reason to doubt, our sinfulness in the sight of a holy God, though we may not be so sensible of it, as to take the proper measures to

obtain forgiveness. It is to make men thus sensible of their transgressions, and of their condemnation by the law of God, that the preaching of the word by the ministers of Christ, was ordained. And his ministers rely chiefly on the word which they preach, impressed upon the heart by the Holy Spirit, for producing that conviction of sin, which is the first requisite to conversion.

It is true, we appeal to the conscience, and bid every one say, after a little self-examination, whether he can stand in the sight of God pure from sin, with a clean heart. We ask every one to look beyond the veil which shuts out the view of God's awful tribunal, and consider how he could appear before it, without some other protection than his own innocence. And we are confident, that the testimony of every honest heart, would be that of the psalmist, "If thou, Lord, shouldst be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who may abide it?" He would thus acknowledge and confess his manifold sins and offences, which were known to himself, and (with a conviction that he was so prone to sin, that he could not enumerate all his transgressions,) he would, in the language of the same psalmist, cry out, in mingled confession and supplication, "Who can tell how oft he offendeth? O cleanse thou me from my secret faults!" There are few, then, who without the warnings of revelation, would not, (if they would deeply reflect upon the character of God, and the demands of his law written in nature and in the heart,) be convicted of sin, and be induced to seek some mode of expiation. But they will not reflect. This is the great difficulty.

How much more powerful are the appeals of God's word, the doctrines and warnings of his revelation through Christ Jesus! We mean, more powerful in their nature; for they are little more so in effect, because of the want of reflection in those to whom they are addressed. Even those who pretend to believe in the Christian revelation, are unmoved by its truths, as much so as if the Bible were known to be false. And how can we account for this? Do they believe that the Bible contains the word of God, and yet withhold their belief in that word? Or, admitting it all to be true, do they deem themselves exempt from the obligation to be guided and governed by it? Do they believe that all sinners must repent, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ in order to be saved; and yet do they rest securely under the delusive

hope, that they themselves are not to be ranked among sinners? There may be many who thus think; for it is very hard to convince some men that they are sinners in the sight of God, while they are not conscious of any wickedness in the sight of the world. The moral man, (who knows that he is clear of all imputation of wrong to his fellow men,) is the hardest to be moved by the true doctrines of the gospel in regard to salvation, for the very reason that he is moral. He cannot be convinced that he has any sin to answer for in the sight of God—or any which would not be cancelled by a simple expression of penitence. Indeed, this is the notion of some who may not feel conscious of strict moral purity. It is the plea of those who reject the doctrine of Christ's atoning sacrifice, who deny the spiritual application of the words of our text, and maintain that repentance alone will fully atone for all past sin. But the absurdity of supposing that the evil and eternal consequences of sin can be prevented by a mere feeling or act of repentance, (though that repentance be prolonged through life,) might be shown from the experience of man, in regard to the effects of vice or imprudence in this life. If a man injure his health, and shorten his term of days by early excesses, or waste his fortune by prodigality—all the bitter regret and sincere sorrow that he can possibly feel or express, will not rescue him from the punishment which he has brought upon himself. He may shake the most of a broken constitution; and he may recover his lost fortune by future industry; but his sorrow and his purpose of amendment cannot undo the mischief that he has done. And it makes no difference in the two cases that the misery endured in this life from the faults and follies just named, are owing to the natural constitution of things; for this natural constitution is God's constitution. It is a part of his moral government of the world; and he does all things by fixed laws. We have reason for believing, that he has so ordained the spiritual administration of his government of the world, that the final punishment of sin shall continue after repentance, just as the punishment of early excess and imprudence is suffered to continue after repentance; as we have seen that it is. If it would be unworthy of the character of God, to allow it in the one case, it would be in the other. And as we know that he does allow it in this world, we have no reason to doubt that he will do it in the next. The difference of duration

can make no difference in principle. There is nothing, therefore, independently of revelation, which renders it at all probable, that sin can be atoned for by repentance, or its consequences be prevented by repentance alone. And the doctrine of revelation is, that God has ordained redemption from the power and penalty of sin, through faith in Jesus Christ, by whose blood remission has been obtained for every penitent believer.

The sinner must confess his sinfulness, and come before God in the name of Jesus, stricken in heart, truly penitent, and pray for pardon and sanctification through the merits of his prevailing obedience and sacrifice. He must come to the Saviour, with his face bowed to the earth, conscious of uncleanness, and with a full reliance upon his divine power, cry out earnestly and beseechingly, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Not that the willingness of Jesus should be doubted, but the expression may be regarded as submitting the will of the sinner entirely to the will of the Saviour, as an humble admission of unworthiness, even on repentance, and a confession of trust in his grace alone, for pardon and holiness. If this be done sincerely, the answer of Jesus will be the same prompt and gracious one which he made to the leper, "I will, be thou clean." And this is very simple and intelligible; for, having once offered himself a sacrifice for sin, so that all may be saved who will, our Lord has only to apply the benefits of his sacrifice to every penitent who seeks them in the appointed way. God has ordained, that every one who hears the glad tidings of the redemption through Christ, may obtain a share in it in one particular way, and in that way alone. As soon as a man hears of this redemption, he hears the truth divinely declared, "that he is condemned for sin, and can only be delivered from condemnation through this redemption."

The gospel being true, no man can escape the evil consequences of rejecting it. He may doubt it, or disregard it: but his doubts and his neglect will not affect the truth of the gospel, or its bearing upon the destiny of man. If he doubts or disbelieves it, he loses the benefits which it offers to bestow; but he cannot avoid the condemnation under which it leaves him. And yet we might readily conclude, from the general indifference of mankind on the subject of religion, that it is a very common opinion—that the truths of religion are utterly inoperative upon the condition of

those who reject them. A man may say in his heart, "I do not believe these things, and therefore I have no fears on the subject." This may be very true, and he may live and die in unbelief, and therefore may not suffer any great damage in this world, except the loss of the benefits of religious faith and hope. But he will suffer just as much in another world, as if he had believed the truth of the Scriptures, and had lived in opposition to them. When he comes to appear before the tribunal of Christ, he will know that what he did not believe is true; and he will know it to his eternal wo!

The rejector of Christianity may ridicule the notion of a new life after death, or the continued existence of the same being, with perfect consciousness of identity. But if he believes in a God, he must admit that it is as easy for God to renew as to create—to bring man from the grave, into a higher and more enduring state of being, as it was to breathe into him originally the breath of life. And that it is reasonable to expect that he will do so, appears from many proofs of immortality, drawn from the present constitution of man. And if he be an atheist, he is by no means safe, according to his own principles. For, if he will refer his present being to chance, may not the same chance restore him to life, after he shall have gone to the grave? Admit that he has chanced to live once, and the fearful idea comes up in the mind, may he not chance to live again? Is the one chance less likely than the other? We cannot now pursue this subject; but the thought must be an appalling one to an atheist: even he must admit the probability of a future state of existence, which the Christian religion makes known, and for which it bids us prepare. This preparation consists in having a clean heart and a right mind. None can be made clean but by the blood of Christ, applied by faith, and none can have a right mind in the sight of God, but they who have received the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, which cometh through faith. To the truly penitent believer, Christ has promised the cleansing efficacy of his blood, and the renewing power of the Spirit of holiness. In both these modes of imparting grace, (which together constitute complete redemption,) Christ is ever nigh to the penitent sinner. And if he comes in a posture of humble supplication, confessing his uncleanness, and begging to be cleansed, Christ will receive him gracious-

ly; and with a voice of authority, accompanied with an exercise of power, will say to him, "I will, be thou clean."

Be yours the penitence and faith, my hearers, and yours will be the mercy and salvation. But think not to secure the one while you fail to exhibit the other. And remember, that if you have not bowed yourself before the Saviour, who has been continually preached to you, and sought the cleansing power of his blood, you are still in such a state of impurity, that you cannot, by any efforts, obtain the favour of God. Unless you believe in his redemption, and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, which is the reward of faith, you will not, for you cannot, keep his commandments. So long as the foul corruption of the leprosy of sin cleaves to the soul, no man can become an heir of eternal happiness. And it will cleave to the soul of every one, until the power of Christ, invoked by humble confession and prayer, has been applied to it, as by the voice of the great Almighty Physician, addressed to the miserable leper in the words of our text.

May all who are yet unforgiven, feel conscious of their spiritual wants; and by a suitable and timely application to the true Saviour, obtain that relief which he offers to bestow, which is present peace, and the hope of eternal joy and glory.

SERMON XLV.

CHRISTMAS.

“If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.”—1 KINGS xviii. 21.

THIS was the challenge given by Elijah the prophet, to the tribes of Israel and their idolatrous prophets, whom he called together to determine by plain proof, the respective claims of their idols, and the God whom he served, to worship and trust. When these ten tribes revolted from the authority of Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, under the leading of Jeroboam, a man who had been raised by Solomon to great honours, they became idolaters. The peculiar form of idolatry here alluded to, was probably the worship of the heavenly bodies, or Sabianism, Baal being the same as Belus, or the sun. The idol was a material one, the work of men's hands, and its worship called for a multitude of priests and sacrifices. Elijah wished to call the people to their reason and due reflection upon their position. They had forsaken the worship of Jehovah, who had been revealed to their fathers as the only living and true God: and yet, they must, as he believed, have retained some recollection of the proofs, that the revelation of that God was true. He regards them as still doubting and open to conviction. He would, therefore, have them judge by a fair trial, which religion was worthy of their confidence, and no longer to halt between two opinions. Consider seriously and well what are your hopes and your trust. “If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.” The trial was made, and they acknowledged the Lord Jehovah to be the true God, and their God.

This appeal to men, founded on the reasonableness of religion, may be made at all times. And it will be the condemnation, as

it surely is the reproach, of those who have the gospel of Jesus Christ preached to them, that they have not duly considered this matter, and come to a wise conclusion. It must be the want of proper consideration, which mainly causes the so prevalent neglect of the concerns of the soul, and indifference to the eternal rewards of its full submission to the religion of Christ. These weighty concerns demand serious and earnest attention. And hence irreligion and worldliness have a wider dominion; for the things of this world are presented in such attractive form, as to dazzle and delude those, who, not being disposed to serious reflection, allow themselves to be led in any pleasing path. In every community, and in every congregation of worshippers, there may be some to whom such appeal might be made at all seasons with solemn earnestness; for the great day is approaching in which every one to whom the true God has been preached, must answer to that God for the use made of the light of revelation. And at this season, when the church leads us to the special consideration of the coming of Christ to judge the world which he once came to save, we may put the question of our text to the reason and conscience of those who have not yet given to it a practical answer.

You may wonder how the text can have any application to you, my hearers, or to any congregation of nominally Christian worshippers. But let us see if the sense of the words will not admit of it. And first, let us inquire what is the meaning of the word *Baal*? In the address of Elijah to the people whom he had called together, it was used to denote a particular form of idolatry. But we find the plural form of the word, *Baalim*, in the same chapter. And we may regard the word *Baal* as truly expressing any idolatry—any departure from the worship of God. At any rate, we propose to make this application of the term to such idolatry as now prevails in the world, in the midst of a community known as Christian, and having Christian privileges. With this view, we beg you to bear in mind, that idolatry does not consist in worshipping images which represent false gods. The sin of it does not lie in the particular thing worshipped, or in the material of which it is made: nor does it demand any material image at all. Such devotion to the world, its riches, honours, or pleasures, as shuts out God from the mind, or steals away the heart from him, is idolatry. And we are guilty of idolatry if we set up an image in our heart, just as much as if we set it upon our family altar.

The man who puts his heart in riches makes a god of gold. It is a golden image, as truly as was that of Nebuchadnezzar. He who gives up himself to sensual pleasure, no matter whether it be gross or refined, offers sacrifice to an idol, as surely as did the worshippers of Moloch. The courtier, who fawns upon men higher than himself, but like himself, created of the dust of the earth, bows down to an image of clay, enshrined in his heart. The votary of fashion, the most fickle, and least trustworthy of all the thieves which steal away the hearts of mortals, worships a creature of this world, and is an idolater. Whatever, then, be the engrossing care of each individual, whether it be worldly gain, or what we call money-making, or love of money, and pride in it, or blind submission to the folly and fashion of the world (for there are a legion of devils seeking man's overthrow) whatever, earnestly pursued, or fixedly clung to, draws away the heart from God, and the eternal life which God has promised to all who will come to him through Christ Jesus—all this is idolatry—the worship of a Baal which has turned away the heart from God.

World-worship, in its many forms, is seen mingled far too closely and largely with ostensible adoration of God, and devotion to his service, in the practice of persons professedly Christian. Many of those who have taken Christian vows, which demand the renouncing of “the world, the flesh and the devil,” show a lamentable halting between two services wholly incompatible. Amidst much lukewarmness in religion, there is an eager coveting of the things of this world, and fond indulgence in pleasures which rob God of the heart, and make the Christian profession formal and lifeless. Will not all whose consciences accuse them of such practical departure from God, be reminded by our text of their professed choice of the true object of worship, and in connexion with it, of the words of our Lord and Saviour, “Ye cannot serve two masters?”

But, the appeal comes with more power and adaptedness to those who make no profession of attachment to the cause of Christ, and of trust in him as the manifestation of the true God. To all those, who, although they enter the house of God, where worship is offered to him, do not bow down their hearts to him; who come within the sound of the precious words of truth, which are uttered as God's voice, proclaiming the gospel of salvation, without being

moved to penitence and faith, and confession of sin; to all, who, in spite of all the proofs, that the gospel is the true word of God, and teaches the only way of escaping eternal wrath and attaining eternal life, treat it with indifference or scorn, we put the question of our text, and bid them settle it with their own souls, with all the risk before them of a wrong decision, "If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." And the true spirit of the question is this: "Is the world, in any of the forms of attractiveness which beset and enchain you, able to afford you peace in the hour of sorrow, sickness, and death? Can any pleasure or any sin stand in the place of God? Will the course of life led by you, be such as you can look back upon with satisfaction, when called to make a final decision between your Baal and the God who is revealed to you by the Lord Jesus Christ?" The appeal is made as to the reasonableness of a course of conduct opposed to the teaching of a religion proved to be divine, in whatever degree it may be opposed to it. The Saviour of the world comes to you with words that burn, expostulating with you on your unreasonableness; "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." He adds the solemn assurances, "Whosoever believeth on me hath everlasting life: He that believeth not shall be damned."

Eternal life, with all its precious hopes and comforting anticipations, its sublime and glorious realizations in another world, is offered by Him who was the image and the word of God to creatures of his hand, who must perish forever, unless they accept the offer; and yet they hesitate or refuse, their hearts being bound to the service of their several idols, or their minds too much absorbed with business or pleasure to give any heed to such momentous matters. And are men just to themselves, as well as to the religion of Christ, if they do not give it deep and earnest consideration? But how few of those who show no special interest in religion, bestow upon its proofs, its doctrines, rewards and penalties, a tithe of the attention paid to the common business of their several callings! Few would be willing to bestow as little upon the title deeds of an estate about to be purchased, or which was offered for sale. Any speculation for profit in this life, would claim and receive far more care and anxious search from worldly people, than they allow the tremendous sanctions of religion to receive.

It is fearful to think how many there are of those who must go down to final judgment, revealed so clearly in the word of God, which they despise, with the weight of condemnation on their immortal souls, caused by the rejection of truth which might have saved them—of a mediation of divine love brought down to the humblest human capacity. In the midst of the bright effulgence of gospel day, thousands whom Christ came to save—Christ born unto us as a Saviour, of the flesh of man, God dwelling therein—divine love and human patience, of suffering blending in mysterious harmony—thousands of these intelligent and responsible beings turn away from this brightness which emanates from the throne of God, to revel in the sable light of their own misguiding reason, or grope in the darkness of wilful blindness.

It is dreadful beyond expression to Christ's ministers, those who represent, as pleaders, for the full and hearty recognition of God's claims, Elijah before assembled Israel, to see the multitude, gathered around them, who seem to be, and doubtless are, unconcerned about the consequences of a halting, or an utterly unbelieving state, as if the riches, and pleasures, and follies of this life, were all that they need provide for, as if there were no heaven, and no hell, no testimony of redeeming love, no revealed God to claim their love, gratitude, and obedience.

The record of God's amazing love for man, is plain and convincing, to all who will diligently read, or attentively hear it, so that none can shelter themselves from responsibility, under the plea that they cannot believe it. Unbelief is sin; for it proceeds from a sinful neglect of the word, which shines so brightly to the willing mind; or, from a love of the world of wickedness, an habitual sacrifice to Baal, and denial of the claims of the true God. It will be a matter of very little difference whether those, to whom Christ is preached as the appointed Saviour and Judge, go away from his cheering invitations, "one to his farm, another to his merchandise," careless of the appeal, or whether they turn in bold defiance to the paths of sinful pleasure and deliberate wickedness, saying in their hearts, "we will not have this man to reign over us;" responsibility, fearful and eternal, will rest upon them for their rejection of their divine Lord.

We would now, my brethren and hearers, bring home to your consciences the appeal of our text. Have you given yourselves up

to worldliness and irreligion, so put away God from your thoughts, that you have not considered his claims to worship and obedience, we beg you to settle the question for life and for eternity. "If the Lord be God, follow him." Can the world have the power of a God, to serve, and bless, and comfort, and save you? Can it keep you from sickness or sorrow, or be a sufficient helper in the one, and comforter in the other? When in the midst of cares or pleasure, which shut out God and religion, the precious truths which Christ proclaimed, you are smitten by the hand of God with sickness, and brought low, will the care or the pleasure then have power to fill the aching void, caused by the absence of the eternal Creator, whom you would not love and serve, the merciful Physician, who, while on earth, went about ministering to the sick? And when that sickness brings you nigh unto death, and you feel the dread necessity of a sudden and final decision of the question, who shall be your God, will you find rest in the retrospect of a life of idolatry, and neglect of the claims of the gospel, and hope in the consciousness of a rending of flesh, from all the transitory joys which pertain to this world? If not, secure for yourselves that sure helper and comforter now, while you are in health and strength, before the day of fearfulness and trembling shall come. If the hand of God has been laid on you heavily in bereavement, and sorrowing, you look inward and outward for sources of consolation; will you find it in the remembrance of days of careless living, of neglect of the holy things of God, of forgetfulness of his love and mercy, his care and providence, his revealed tokens of love? Or will you seek it in the courts of vanity, the halls of pleasure, the society of the gay, and the giddy? Are these sufficient sources of comfort to a bruised heart? Will any form of idolatry once adhered to, serve you in this hour of need? Will you not rather look upward to the true God, who sent his only Son Jesus Christ, to comfort the sorrowing, by tender sympathy and strengthening grace, to teach the divine origin and wise purpose of affliction, and to point the soul to a future resurrection to a life of bliss and glory which he will give to all who truly believe in him? Will you not listen to the precious promises of that Lord, who raised the dead to life again, that he might give force to those promises, and bind them to the hearts of his hearers? "Whosoever believeth in me hath ever-

lasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day." Shall not this Lord, who wept with the mourners on earth, ere he removed their sorrow, be your comforter, your God? Are not his words of love and mercy, true and abiding, worthy of the soul's trust for life and for death? Search and see, inquire and decide; prove, and answer, and "if the Lord be God, follow him."

If the true balm for the smitten heart be found in the gospel of Jesus, in a sincere faith in him, as our only sufficient helper, let that faith be shown by an open profession of it in the ordinances of the church, which that Lord has established. Choose him for your God in all things. Give your heart to him as the only Being worthy of your supreme and constant love. Honour him by a prompt submission to all his laws, by devout worship of his majesty, by a constant recognition of his hand in all the events of your life. Consecrate your faculties and your possessions to his service, to the cause of Christ and his church. Glorify his name on earth, and thus secure a title to everlasting glory in heaven. Could we choose a more fitting theme for our devout meditation than this, on the day when we celebrate the birth of our Saviour, the incarnation of the God, whom, as Christians, we acknowledge to be our Lord? On this day, long hallowed by the church, as a season of pious joy and warm thankfulness for the blessings of religion, for the interchange between hearts bound together by a common faith, of tokens of love, and sympathies which overpass the limits of this world, and draw on the revealed bliss of the world beyond the grave, we may dwell with deepest interest on the testimony of the word of God, to the divinity of him whom we worship and serve. We may recall the angelic salutation of the Virgin Mary, the voice from God's messenger to Joseph, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins," referring to the unborn Son of God, and the choral shout of the heavenly host, "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good will towards men," which responded to the glad tidings, "Unto you is born this day a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

With bounding hearts, we who believe the record of God's love manifested in his indwelling in the flesh for man's salvation, may gather all the evidences which establish our faith, and rehearse them to ourselves, for our quickening in devotion and godliness.

Let us strive to realize the glorious inheritance which our Lord has bought for us by the sacrifice for which his incarnation was chiefly ordained, and live as sons of God, that we may be truly heirs of God, and joint partakers with Christ of the kingdom of heaven. And may Christ be born in the hearts of many, who have hitherto known him not as the Lord their God, that they also may be able to utter their glad testimony to his just claim to their love, reverence, and hearty devotion. May all be able to say, with truth and earnestness, with gladness mingled with serious resolves of future devotedness, as we bring into close association this anniversary of the natal day of Jesus of Nazareth, with the actual manifestation of him to a wondering world, "Unto us is born this day, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." And may we all be moved to a devout expression of our feelings, in the words of the angels to the shepherds of Israel, "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good will towards men."

SERMON XLVI.

NEW YEAR.

“The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.”—JEREMIAH
viii. 20.

THIS was the mournful cry of the Jews, who were weary with watching for deliverance from the just judgments of God, which they had brought on themselves by wilful and obstinate rebellion. The lapse of time was marked by the successive seasons of the year, as determined by the earth's motion in space, as well as by its products under the hand of culture. And the pathetic allusion to the harvest, which preceded the summer, and to the fading away of summer into sad and dreary winter, betokening the gloom of hopelessness, affords a picture of their distress which calls for deep commiseration. They had looked for salvation from the miseries for which they were not prepared, and had looked eagerly in vain. And as they watched the coming and going of year after year, and yet discerned no signs of rescue, their hearts sank in despair, and the wail was heard from many voices, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.”

So may the captive in his dungeon mark with painful exactness the years of his sad and helpless thralldom, or the afflicted note the duration of the sorrow which God's chastening hand has laid upon him. And so may they who are held in bondage to Satan, review year by year, the time past of their lives which has been suffered to pass unimproved, with a sad lamentation for their waste of precious moments, the casting away of means of grace and offers of salvation.

The beginning of a new year is a fit time to take a retrospect

of our lives. Few can look back upon a bygone year with perfect satisfaction. Many find way marks of folly, wickedness or suffering; upon which the mind reluctantly rests, and from which it would gladly bound onward with eager anticipation of a better and happier year to come. But conscience lays her hand upon them, and stays them, till they have read the lesson of the past. We shall all do well to heed this lesson, whether we have professed to seek that best of all man's hopes, a title to eternal life, or have preferred to this the joys which perish with the body. If during the year that has just gone to mingle its notes of warning with the voices of the past, we have failed to make good use of the privileges of our calling in Christ Jesus, we should be reminded, by the lapse of time, of our approach to the end of our term of probation, and to the judgment after death, for the misused opportunities which we mourn. And the memento of life's fleeting character will serve to quicken our diligence, and warm our zeal in the pursuit of that holiness which should be the constant and highest object of life. To the professed disciple of Christ, time is a talent, for which he must answer before the Lord in the great day of account. But to the sinner who has not laid hold on Christ, the Saviour, time is precious opportunity that should be prized above all things which time measures. All its sands are golden, more precious than rubies. The moments which make up years, of which man has few indeed, when viewed as the term of his probation, may be regarded as *strands* of a rope on which he is suspended over an abyss of ruin. Their gradual untwisting leaves, year after year successively, a lessening cord, till but a single slender thread separates him from destruction.

Yet few sinners estimate their time with reference to eternal retribution. None surely can do so, who do not strive to win the hope of salvation, which is set before them in the gospel. And yet the word of God bids us count "our life as a vapour, which soon vanishes away," and "so to number our days as to apply our hearts unto wisdom." While, therefore, it behooves the believer to devote the first day of the new year to a careful review of the past, in order that he may make a better use of the time to come, the unbeliever should mourn over a lost portion of that season of grace, which once past can never return, and which may be found at last too short for the great work of

his salvation. And we mean by "unbelievers," all who have not embraced the hope of salvation, through a settled and avowed faith in Christ. All such persons may well take up, at the present season, the lamentation in our text, and say, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." This may with good reason be done, first, by persons of *any* age, who are still living in sin, with reference to the loss of a large portion of their term of trial. For one year is a large, very large portion of the term of trial allotted to some men. The unpardoned sinner should consider that he has lost a full year of grace, that his moral responsibility has increased in a fearful ratio, that he is more sinful, and of course more deeply guilty in the sight of God, than he was when he began the year just past, and that while he has more to repent of, he has less time for repentance, that while his condemnation is greater his hope of salvation is more feeble, because his evil habits are stronger and more unyielding in consequence of the indulgence afforded them. Reflections of this kind he may reasonably pursue, even if he has had no special awakening, no remarkable visitings of God's Spirit, whose power has been resisted and goodness despised. But if the retrospect which his conscience holds up to him, shows any seasons of peculiar religious movement, if he can remember that while many around him were brought to a knowledge of salvation, he had been almost persuaded to be a Christian in faith and hope, and consistent profession, but had fallen back into sin, through hardness of heart, he may well fear that the harvest of souls is indeed past, and that he will be cast out among the tares for the final burning. The young, whose minds are active, and affections fresh, and who of course embrace warmly what they fasten upon, should regard their youth as the harvest season in spiritual things, and should therefore give their best days to religion. Let them not spend their strength in making work for late repentance, in the vain hope that in riper age they will find the ways of godliness more inviting. They may thus flatter themselves into quiet resting in the embrace of a fatal friendship with the world. But if they look about them, and observe those, who, like themselves, indulged the hope of a pious old age, still treading with deeper and deeper step in the bogs of wickedness and irreligion, as they draw nearer to the grave, they will learn to regard their harvest season as subjects

of divine grace, like the grain harvest of the Jews, as preceding the summer. Let them do so, and use such diligence in the work of their salvation, that they may not be called to mourn over the lost season of grace, when both harvest and summer are past.

So too may the middle aged, who have grown sturdy in sin and unbelief, as they have grown in years, apply to themselves the warning which the text speaks to all who draw near to judgment for unforgiven sin. They have heard from the days of childhood, the warnings and invitations of the gospel; to each one of them, God has said, "My son, give me thy heart—" and "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth," and "They that seek me early shall find me." When the heart was most susceptible of religious impressions, when the tender appeals of God's mercy in Christ Jesus, were urged with a seemingly fair prospect of winning the soul to a saving faith in Him, then the trifling joys of the world were suffered to mingle their attractions with these sober and solemn concerns, and to draw off the half converted from the pursuit of eternal blessedness. And now, with hearts almost callous to the influence of God's Spirit, with minds bent upon worldly pleasures or honours, and hands eager to clutch earthly riches, they have ceased to regard religion as an object worthy of their notice, in comparison with the perishable things of the world, and have left it for the days when they can have no pleasure in them. As if the love of wealth, at least, would not cling to the heart till its last throbbings, and shut out that eager longing for eternal riches, which should be the first and last feeling of all to whom Christ is preached. All those surely, who have passed the freshness of youth and much of the vigour of manhood in sinful unbelief, may look back with mournful solicitude for their souls' welfare, and say with truth and earnestness, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."

And with how much certainty of application can they use the lamentation, who are verging towards the second childhood, when the grasp which the mind can take of anything new is feeble and wavering. If all the work of salvation is deferred till this season of bodily decay, if that which demands the full vigour of the mind, and the warmest affections of the heart, is left for dull old age, and closing decrepitude, if palsied hands

must strive to lay hold on Christ, and tottering steps follow the narrow path to eternal life, the chance of successful striving will be a small one, and the risk of final ruin fearful to contemplate. And yet how many deliberately put off, while young and vigorous, the necessary and most important work of religion, in the vain expectation of an opportunity to finish it at the close of life! Will they not learn the lesson taught by the imbecile epicure, the starveling miser of four score, or the hoary-headed blasphemer? Let them consider that even if they attain to old age, they may not attain to the wisdom which should mark it; that although they may have more opportunity, they will also have greater responsibility, and that the burden which they are too feeble to bear they will be unable to cast off. Let the sinner, of whatever age he may be, measure his time of allotted existence on earth, with reference to his condition after death, let him count years as moments in duration, and moments as years in value, using them diligently in promoting his soul's salvation. For the hour of death, whenever it may come, will draw from the unpardoned sinner a confession of folly, of recklessness, or self-delusion, in suffering the day of grace to pass unimproved. It is indeed a sober and a solemn thought, at the close of one of the few years which are "brought to an end like a tale that is told," that so many days have gone with their record of sins, of abused mercies and despised offers of salvation, to swell the testimony against us at the day of judgment.

How much greater will be the solemnity of that awful hour, when arrested by the conscience on the threshold of the grave, the door to a new world, we are compelled to look back with fearful scrutiny upon a wasted life. Then, as the curtain which hides the past is lifted, and we see the long and dark calendar of seasons which have come and gone, since mercy was first revealed to us, each marked by its many tokens of grace, that has been despised or unheeded, we shall utter a wail of deep distress as in the words of Israel's lamentation. For the summer of life will have passed, with no trace but the thought of desolation, and the harvest, with nothing but the heaps prepared for the burning, to tell that it has gone by. No genial showers of grace have refreshed us, no sheaves of bountiful love have been gathered into our bosom. But the icy chill of life's winter holds us in his thrall, and with steps tottering to a hopeless grave, we wrestle

with the painful thought, that the harvest is indeed past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.

My dear hearers, the close of life may be such as to forbid all review of the past, by way of reformation, and all forecasting of the retributions of futurity. Wait not for this period, supposing it far removed from the present. But fearing lest the end of the year just begun may be the end of your pilgrimage on earth, devote the beginning of it to such a survey of your life, as you would take at its last hour. You can look back upon many mercies, and upon many trials, perhaps; the trials being the greatest mercies when viewed religiously. You can count God's offers of pardon far better than you can enumerate the sins for which pardon has been offered through the mediation of Christ.

Have you, who have professed to be the Lord's followers, and heirs of his promises, made such use of the religious privileges afforded you, that you have thereby grown in grace? Are you stronger in faith, firmer in principles, more cheerful in hope, and more perfect in obedience, than you were at the beginning of the year that has just fled? Some of you have had warnings, through the chastenings of your heavenly Father. Have they been heeded attentively, and received submissively? Sickness has lingered around some, and death has come nigh to others, narrowing their domestic circle, and bidding them give up to the Lord what the Lord himself gave. In all this God teaches you, his children by adoption, to measure your joys by the privileges of the new birth, and to count all things but loss in comparison with that winning of Christ's favour, which is everlasting salvation. Walking by faith and not by sight, you are to estimate your trials according to their efficacy in fitting you for a world of bliss beyond the grave. Has sorrow then purified you? Has it weaned you in any degree from worldly affections?

Have all God's dealings with you served to keep you in the way of his commandments, in the path of godliness, through faith in Christ? This self-scrutiny should be submitted to by all of you, lest you fail to continue in the faith unto the end, and find at last, after all your professions of faith, that you have come short of salvation. But chiefly does it become all who have not yet begun to lead a life of holiness through faith in Christ Jesus, to bring under close review the portion of their life passed in unbelief, especially that portion embraced by the year that has

just fled. It was perhaps not unlike that which went before it. But whether so or not, the recollection of the events which marked it, is yet fresh, and you can therefore note with accuracy the providences, the warnings and invitations, the tokens of God's love, and strivings of his Spirit, which together make up your moral accountability. The gospel has been preached to you. Why has it not been received and obeyed? The ordinances of the church have been set before you. Why have you not, in true faith and devout humility, submitted to them? The privileges of the church have been constantly within your reach. Why have you not enjoyed them for your spiritual comfort and edification?

These offers of Christ's love and mercy, we know you have slighted. God only knows how many special visitings of his Spirit you have mocked or wrestled with. Search your own heart, and try it by the word of God. Bear the torch of divine truth into its inmost chambers, and fathom the depths of its iniquity. Read in secret the record on your memory's tablet, and ask yourself what will be your hope in the hour of your dissolution. Can you trust that it will be any better than it now is? Or is all dark before you, and dreary and desolate? Look well to your case now, lest in the great gathering of souls at the marriage supper of the Lamb, (of which the sacred feast now before us is both an emblem and a foretaste) you be cast out, and whilst others are joining in glad songs of triumph, you dwell amidst sounds of weeping and wailing, where the cry of anguish will be the echo of that sad lament, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." May God avert from you this fearful doom! May you all so improve this new year of grace, that you may have joy and peace in believing, the foreshadowing of that glory which will be the crown of the faithful in the kingdom of heaven!

SERMON XLVII.

ASH WEDNESDAY.

“I humbled my soul with fasting.”—PSALM XXXV. 13.

FASTING, as a religious practice, is of Jewish origin, and like other observances of the Jews, was adopted by the Christian church. As a special appointment of the law of Moses, for a definite time, it was a preparation for the yearly expiation. The humiliation expressed by the fast, was forty days before the expiation. The Christian church very early fixed the same length of time for the continuance of the fasting season, which directly precedes the expiation of the sins of the world; by our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is not easy to determine whether the season of Lent, which is the fasting season of the church, and which this day begins, was limited to forty days, in designed conformity to the Jewish ordinance, or whether the early Christians had respect also and chiefly to our Saviour's fasting in the wilderness. He fasted forty days, and perhaps he did so, to conform to the marked period during which God covered the earth with the deluge. The same number frequently occurs in sacred history, in connexion with humiliation and repentance. The children of Israel were proved in the wilderness forty years. Moses fasted forty days in the mount, and Elijah also in the wilderness. So the Ninevites had the same number of days allowed them for repentance.

But whatever may have been the particular motive of the church, to whose authority we bow, it is certain that by her authority the special season of fasting in Lent is limited to forty

days. It is by ecclesiastical appointment that the particular times of fasting are enjoined, but the duty and propriety of the exercise seems to be recognised by Holy Scripture. Our Saviour not only practised it, as we have seen, on his entrance upon the work of his ministry, but he gave directions to his disciples respecting the use of it. Rebuking the abuse of it by the Pharisees, he enjoined the proper use of it, in terms which rather sanction than forbid it, as a continual observance of his church. He even declares that his disciples shall fast, in token of sorrow, doubtless after his ascension from earth to heaven. "The days will come when the Bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days."

Fasting is usually mentioned in connexion with prayer, in such a manner as to show, not only that it is a truly spiritual exercise, but also a great help to the spiritual power of prayer. Our Lord said to the twelve disciples, when they asked him why they could not cast out the unclean spirit, "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."

St. Paul evidently practised it much, as an exercise of self-discipline, and in his epistle to the Corinthian church, he recognises it as a familiar custom. And from the days of the apostles, it has been deemed a valuable help to penitence and devotion. And so it was by the holy men of the Jewish church. Many of the professed members thereof, did, as doubtless many of the Christian church now do, make the mere outward act, in token of obedience to positive injunction, a substitute for the spiritual exercise which it is designed to assist. And we read, in the Holy Scriptures, pointed rebukes of the formal service. But it was not thus with David, as we may learn from our text. He humbled his soul with fasting. He used it to quicken and deepen his sorrow. And we may properly take the text for an expression of the true design of the exercise of fasting—to humble the soul before God.

In the remarks which we shall make on this subject, we shall confine ourselves to two simple propositions. First, that the church, whose authority we are bound to respect, enjoins an unusual degree of fasting during the season of Lent. Secondly, that the object of this fasting is to promote godliness, through the exercise of self-discipline, humiliation and repentance.

1st. It is one of the articles of our religion, set forth in the

Prayer Book, that "the church hath power to decree rites and ceremonies." And wherever there is a specified power, there must be a corresponding duty of submission. No true son or daughter of the church will refuse to respect the appointment of this annual season of special fasting. The special kind or degree of fasting is not declared. "The church requires such a measure of abstinence as is more especially suited to extraordinary acts and exercises of devotion," on all the days of fasting. These are the forty days of Lent, the Rogation Days, the Ember Days, and all the Fridays in the year, except Christmas day. The Lenten season does not include all the time between Ash Wednesday and Easter, for the six Sundays are excluded, Sunday being always a festival, on which we celebrate our Lord's resurrection. The principal days of Lent are the First day, and the last week—Passion week, and particularly Thursday and Friday of that week, Thursday being the day on which the Lord's Supper was instituted, and Friday being the day of our Lord's crucifixion.

This first day of Lent was called by the primitive Christians Ash Wednesday, because, being the beginning of the season when the discipline of the church was exercised upon offenders, those who were penitent expressed their deep humiliation by covering themselves with sackcloth and *ashes*.

The season of Lent was observed by the primitive Christians with great strictness. They were very rigid in their abstinence and self-discipline, sometimes practising entire abstinence from food for several days. The practice of the church differs in different ages, in this as well as every other religious observance. The spirit of the age, the tone of religious sentiment, will affect the standard of piety, so that what would be counted as an extraordinary act of devotion at one period, would not be deemed so at another. And therefore the church has done wisely in leaving the degree of abstinence, which should be observed, to be determined by the conscience and the judgment of every individual Christian, under the guidance of authorized teachers.

The church *requires* abstinence and fasting of all her members. But the degree of it must depend upon circumstances of health and outward condition in the world. And the same conscientiousness, which will direct a compliance with the requisitions

of the church, will also safely regulate the mode of showing our humiliation by fasting. The great object of the observance is, as we declared in our second proposition, to promote godliness by self-humbling and repentance.

Our fasting should therefore be accompanied with exercises of deep contrition for sin, and earnest prayer for grace to lead a more holy life.

These exercises are *always* becoming in the Christian. He should habitually consider his sinfulness and the great mercy of his divine Saviour, and be brought to much self-humbling before God. But it is highly proper and useful also, to set apart a special season for special self-examination, with a view to self-discipline. And what time more fit than that which is marked with deep sorrow, by the remembrance of the sufferings and death of Christ, on the near approach of the anniversary of his crucifixion? Let this fit season be improved in the spirit of the psalmist, when he said, "I humbled my soul with fasting." All who have ever practised abstinence, with a view to closer and more uninterrupted religious meditation or devotion, will bear testimony to its efficacy.

The habit of duly observing every *Friday* in the year, in conformity to the direction of our mother church, while it will doubtless promote, in some degree, the health of the body, will surely help the striving of the soul after godliness. And in whatever degree it may be convenient to practise abstinence, we believe that every member of the church would find some spiritual benefit in a faithful following of the counsel of the church. The humbling of the spirit, and the subduing of the carnal appetites, are the objects aimed at by this injunction of fasting. The inward grace is the main thing, of which God only can take full cognizance. But the outward act, the manner of living, as respects the daily sustenance, is a thing to be observed by those with whom we have constant social or domestic intercourse. They who choose to observe us will see if we are *not consistent*, if we neglect to keep the institutions of our religion. Let the self-denial be real. Let there be a change in the habits of living so as to mark a change in the season, as marked by the church. It is of no use to say, in order to excuse ourselves from any troublesome self-denial, that the fast is a *spiritual* exercise. It is indeed of a spiritual character, having spiritual good for

its object. But the nature which we are called to subdue by the exercise of diligent self-control, is a *carnal* one. The fleshly appetites are the great hinderances to devotion—to religious zeal, and to holiness of life. And here, where the besetting temptations lie, is the great effort to be made for our furthering in the Christian graces. We are urged by the word, and the example an apostle of Jesus, to keep the *body* in subjection. St. Paul says, “I keep under my body, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I should be myself a castaway.”

If you would have a true notion of the demands and designs of the church at this holy season, look carefully at the services for this day. You will see that the body is to be subjected to a system of self-denial, with a view to the cleansing and strengthening of the *soul*. The soul is retarded in her flights by the weight of the body’s grossness. And in order to give her opportunity to rise to that height which she should attain in her holy communings, the body must be sometimes barely sustained in the strength requisite to its healthy action. You will not mistake the object of a *fasting* season, if you ponder the solemn services of the church for this day.

They are well calculated to enforce the duties of humiliation, and repentance, of a sincere confession of, and genuine sorrow for, the sins which we call “a grievous and intolerable burden.” Consider the doctrines which you have heard, and the confessions which you have made, and strive to frame your hearts and lives in accordance with them. Let a deep sense of sinfulness in the sight of God, induce you to humble yourselves before him. And let the precious sacrifice, whereby you were redeemed, draw from your hearts deep sorrow, for the ungratefulness of sin, committed against Him “who so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life.” Let the remembrance of the cross of Christ induce you to take up your cross, to mortify the flesh by self-denial, so to subdue it to the spirit as to follow all its motions in the way of holiness.

Whatever desire, or evil passion rises in rebellion most resolutely against divine authority—should be most strenuously resisted. Let each individual study the plague of his own heart, and use such self-denial as may be necessary to cure it. If you feel convinced that your zeal in the service of God has grown

cold, that you have allowed yourselves to be drawn away from spiritual things by any *carnal* appetite, strive earnestly to deny that appetite, and to renew, by more frequent acts of devotion, your languishing piety. Be oft in close communion with God, and with sincere and ardent supplication for help, search your own soul. Call upon God for grace to enable you to cast down the idols which you have set up, in the words of our beautiful hymn:—

“The dearest idol I have known,
Whate’er that idol be;
Help me to tear it from thy throne;
And worship only thee.”

If this be the sincere prayer of the believer in Christ, expressing a solemn purpose to use the divine and offered helps to spiritual striving, the invoked aid of the Holy Spirit will be given. Prayer and fasting are thus fitly, as they are divinely associated. We should *fast* that we may pray more fervently, and without disturbance, from the distracting cares for the comfort of our carnal nature. And we should pray, that our fasting may be blessed of God as a means of spiritual improvement. These exercises of faith and devotion are commended to you, my hearers, at all times, but especially at this season. You will find them profitable to your souls. All the discipline to which you submit for the strengthening of holy purposes, will redound to your eternal well being. If *now*, when the church puts off her robes of rejoicing, in token of the coming of the season of her Lord’s wo, you put away from you some of the ordinary indulgences of your fleshly nature, as a mark of your sympathy with her, and submission to her, you will by and by have the better inward witness that you are partakers of his resurrection, which you will be called to celebrate at Easter. May God grant us all that sure witness, in a heart free from idolatry and pollution, and devoted to Christ, in obedience to his will, as made known by the church, and set forth in his holy word.

There is one practical mode of humbling the soul, which is especially commended to your careful consideration. It is the devoting ourselves to works of charity at the cost of some self-denial, not merely the sparing of some of the cost of self-indulgence, that we may have the more to give to the cause of charity, whether in the shape of bounty to the poor in worldly goods, or

in missionary efforts for the well being of the spiritually destitute, but also the willing employment of our time and care, our thoughts and our hands, in the same labour of love. It is, to many, a cheap bargain, with a conscience exercised on religious duties, to give a little of their money to help forward the work which the church is bound to do. This may be an easy thing, even if they do, as few really do, contribute liberally to the cause. But it is irksome to the same persons to spend a certain portion of their time regularly in doing good to the destitute, the sorrowing, and the dead in trespasses and sins. Now to these it will be the most wholesome self-denial to set apart a portion of their time, and to apply their minds systematically to the cause of charity and church extension.

It is a Christian duty at all times to cherish these objects. But it is a duty which should be brought to mind, forcibly, at a time when the church calls for an unusual degree of self-denial. For in this mode of exercising it, every Christian may find great spiritual benefit, while engaged in a work which blesses many others. Every member of the church is bound by a vow which can only be fully paid by active benevolence. Not only should each find a neighbour in him who is needy, and thus recognise a call for the oil and wine of comfort, as well as for food, and raiment and shelter, but he should look abroad for the suffering who cannot come in his way, and send abroad, to the blind in heart, the light of God's saving truth. While therefore, as members of the body of Christ, the church, you should diligently strive to build yourselves up in godliness, through self-discipline and the mortification of all that is carnal; you should also, as members of a great missionary society whose field is the world, labour earnestly to extend the blessings of gospel peace and church privileges to all who have them not. You have missionary work to do at your very door. There are many in our midst whose condition demands your zeal and your offerings.

A mission* is already begun, which affords an outlet for all the exuberance of love which has not yet found a sufficient channel. Let the gospel in the church be carried to the poor of our

* An enterprise that resulted in the formation of the parish of St. John's, now (1854) a most interesting, and well established church, being the second new congregation formed through the zeal and activity mainly of members of the old parish of Christ Church, Mobile.

city. Provide for them a house of prayer in which they can freely offer their devotions, and receive without price the privileges that are truly priceless.

Let the season of Lent be spent in the Lord's service. And let there be something to show at the end of the season that you have been doing, and what you have done. Then, having given proof that, through the well recognised vows of baptism, you have been buried with Christ in His death, may you at Easter have the well assured hope of rejoicing in the contemplation of your share in his glorious resurrection.

For what is the end at which the display of our light aims? It is the glorifying of God. We are exhorted so to live that others seeing how we live, may recognise and acknowledge the purity and efficacy of the principles upon which we act, and thus honour the divine Author of the system of religion, which produces such results. And it is the exhibition of the morals of religion which is here contemplated. But the desire and the endeavour to obtain credit with the world for practising fasting to a great degree, is glorifying one's self, instead of glorifying God. And the object of fasting is self-humbling, the discipline of one's own heart and soul, which can be done in secret, where none but God is nigh to observe the act. Hence we see good reason for opposite injunctions in the two cases.

But it must not be inferred that we must hide our self-denial and self-mortification from our fellow men. Every such exercise of discipline upon the body for the benefit of the soul, should proceed as if we thought not of the exercise, but as between our own souls and our God, just as we pray to God in our closets or in our families, not caring if we are seen or heard, but not particularly desiring that our devotions should be observed. The object of the fasting practised as a religious duty, being the purifying and strengthening of the soul, it is a matter with which the stranger intermeddleth not. On one account it may be well to let the *fact* be known that we do practise fasting, as an act of devotion enjoined by the church, because we profess to hold the authority of the church in high estimation, and surely desire to maintain a reputation for faithfulness and consistency. But the degree of abstinence practised need not be known by the world. The church enjoins a good rule, in adopting which we shall honour her authority, and at the same time secure the

object which she aims at by recommending it—and that is to practise “such a measure of abstinence as will best promote godliness.”

This is the rule which we would exhort you to apply to your acts of self-discipline, as Christians and members of the church. Some denial of the ordinary appetites is of course contemplated. There should be no mere outward show of strictness. And there would seem to be a great proneness to this outward show, in all who attempt to comply with any injunction touching bodily exercises. For we find the prophets and teachers of the Israelites continually reminding them of the hollowness and insufficiency of all demonstrations of devotion, which do not involve a true inward devotion. Even in that peculiarly ceremonial religion prescribed for the Jews, it was enjoined upon the subjects of it, that the heart must show that purity which the ceremonies fitly illustrated. The service for this day contains portions of the Old Testament which fully prove this. We read the word of the prophet Joel, saying, “Rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God.” Here we have an allusion to the custom of tearing the garments to express grief and sorrow, under any affliction, either of heart or soul. So common was this custom that they who wished to *appear* sorrowful, or put on the semblance of emotion, would rend *their clothes*, and thus easily satisfy their consciences, and obtain credit with others for a true feeling of sorrow. So, in the case of penitence towards God; the outward act which usually indicated the feeling, was an easy thing, and there was therefore great danger of resting upon it. Hence the prophet bade the people rend their hearts, and not their garments merely; to be truly contrite and penitent, and turn unto the Lord with a sincere desire to obtain remission of their sins. Much more emphatic is the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ, in regard to heart service. We are urged to set a watch upon the heart, from which proceed all evil thoughts and desires, and in which the seeds of holiness must be implanted for the renewing of our fallen nature. “My son, give me thy heart,” is the constant appeal of our heavenly Father to each wayward child to whom he has offered salvation.

A careful training of the affections so that they may run Godward always, and yield the clustering fruits of righteousness—is often and earnestly inculcated.

SERMON XLVIII.

CHRIST'S DESCENT INTO HELL—THE INTERMEDIATE STATE.

“Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption.”—Acts ii. 27.

ONE of the articles of the Christian faith, as contained in the Apostles' Creed, which every baptized person acknowledges, is that “Christ descended into hell.” The rubric declares that any churches may omit that article in reciting the creed, or substitute the equivalent expression, “He went into the place of departed spirits.” The church thus explains the phrase, which she authorizes her members to omit, if they will, in the daily service. The reasons for this permission may be these:—that the use of a word which has lately had a meaning very different from that which it has in the creed, might cause confusion, and serve to perpetuate error, and that while the fact asserted is really inseparable from that of Christ's death, the belief of it adds nothing to the efficacy of that faith which holds to his crucifixion, death and resurrection, for man's redemption. Nevertheless, it is a matter of so much importance that one of the articles of religion which every minister is bound to subscribe, declares, “that as Christ died for us and was buried, so is it to be believed that he went down into hell.” This truth he is bound to teach, or at least to receive, and he can teach nothing contrary to it—because it is a truth clearly revealed in Holy Scripture. Let us, therefore, as we may with especial fitness, at this season, consider the true meaning of the assertion, “He descended into hell,” the proofs from Scripture which support it, and the use of the fact as a part of Christian doctrine.

1. If we look at the phrase as it occurs in the creed, we shall see that it declares a certain fact taking place during the interval between the burial of Christ and his resurrection. "He was crucified, dead and buried;" this is the clause which goes before. Then follows directly the assertion, "He descended into hell." This action of our Lord is said to have been done by him, after he was dead and buried, and before he rose again. Now in his body, as dead, Christ could do nothing, any more than any other dead person. The very notion of death implies an utter want of power to feel or move. This action of Christ, therefore, must have been performed by that part of man which cannot die, which continues active after the death of the body, that is, of the soul separated from the body. The dead body could no more go into hell, than the living soul could be laid in the grave. It seems to be very clear then, that the soul of Christ, after his body had been dead and buried, descended into hell. Now what was the place here called hell? Was it the place of torment assigned to the wicked after death? No. The word has no such meaning here, and it is a pity that it should have been used by the translators of the Bible and the compilers of the Prayer Book. For the usual idea of hell, whenever the word is used by common people is, that dismal frightful place where the fallen angels are kept "in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day." But while the word "hell" is used to express that place of torment, it did not originally have that meaning: neither it, nor the word translated by it, mean anything more than the invisible place of departed souls between death and the general resurrection. The word itself is Saxon, and meant of old a place dark and close, about which nothing could be certainly known; and it was a true rendering of the Hebrew "Sheol" and the Greek "Hades," which words meant the place of departed spirits without regard to their religious condition, where they remained between death and the resurrection. The writers of the New Testament divide this region into two parts, for the separate dwelling of the righteous and the wicked. But the word which we call hell, in the Creed, as in our text, meant the place of abode for souls after death, irrespective of their relation to God, as the subjects of his judgment.

The dogma is important, as showing that our Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled the condition of humanity in every stage of ex-

istence. The plan of redemption which it pleased God to ordain, required that Christ should take our nature upon him, and as he must be conceived, and born, and put to death, so must his soul, as the souls of his ransomed believers, be after death in the intermediate state, in the place of the departed. This was the full satisfying of that condition of humanity which gave to His mediation that efficacy in which believers trust.

All souls after death are in a place of temporary abode, awaiting the day of resurrection. Christ was appointed to die for man's salvation—death involved the necessity of a separation of the soul from the body. At that separation the soul went into a certain place, there to remain till the resurrection. To prove that Christ did in all things become man, we show that his soul underwent this separation; and this we assert in our creed, and this is all which we assert, in the words "He descended into hell." We thereby declare our belief in the fulness of the sacrifice offered by Him who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification. Christ was appointed to take our nature in everything except sin: he was, therefore, begotten of God, and conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of a virgin. There was in him no transmitted taint of human sinfulness. So by divine appointment he was not to undergo corruption, but was to show his power in rising from the dead in the same body in which he suffered. This can be shown by our text, which is one of the proofs of the doctrine that Christ descended into hell.

2. In proving this doctrine, we may use the prophecies of the Old Testament, plainly pointing to the Saviour, the express declarations of our Lord, and the testimony of the apostles, whom he ordained as witnesses of the truth of his religion.

Our text is a prophecy uttered by David, and quoted by St. Peter, in his first sermon, as verified by the resurrection of Christ from the dead: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption."

Having quoted these words, St. Peter says that David did not speak them of himself, but being a prophet, he spake of the resurrection of Christ, that *his* soul was not left in hell, neither did his flesh see corruption. Now from this prophecy, vouched for by an apostle, we infer that Christ did descend into hell; for if his soul was not left in hell at his resurrection, it must have been there before that event. It was not there before his death,

nor after his resurrection, as we well know. Hence it must have been there in the interval between his death and his resurrection.

Thus the prophecy was fulfilled throughout; for the body did not undergo corruption, although it was in the grave where corruption dwells; and the soul, although it went to hell, while the body lay in the grave, was not left there, but was reunited to the body at the appointed time for the resurrection.

Another proof of this doctrine may be drawn from our Saviour's promise to the penitent thief, who was crucified with him. This malefactor, being convinced that Jesus was a righteous man, and had a kingdom in store for him, begged to be remembered in mercy and love. Jesus, ever ready to bless those who will trust in him, said promptly, for his encouragement, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Now in these words we have our Lord's promise to be in paradise that day, in company with this fellow sufferer. Where was this paradise? It was not heaven, for our Lord did not ascend thither till forty days after his resurrection. We might conclude from the connexion of the words with the prayer of the penitent, that they gave promise of happiness or comfort, and, therefore, that they pointed to that region of rest where the souls of the pardoned and redeemed abide in the joyful hope of a blissful resurrection. And this we know to be the case; for the word paradise, or the Greek form *paradeisos*, means that part of hades or hell in which the good spirits dwell. The word was borrowed from the Persian language, and corresponds with the Hebrew Eden.

The expression "Abraham's bosom," means the same as paradise. In this place was the soul of the poor Lazarus; yet he and the rich man, who was tormented, were both in hell, in the same sense in which Christ descended into it. They were both in the place where the souls of the departed remain till the resurrection—Lazarus being in that part of it to which Christ and the penitent thief went, while the rich voluptuary was in the part called Tartarus, the abode of the wretched, who are doomed to final punishment. St. Peter alludes to this division of hades or hell, when he says, in his second epistle, (ii. 4,) of the evil angels, "God cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness to be reserved to judgment." The word here translated "hell," is Tartarus, the place of the wicked.

Into the part of hades or hell which is called paradise, Christ must have entered on the day of his death, or he made a false promise to the penitent suppliant. And as he who then showed himself to be the Son of God, and the divine Saviour, could neither deceive nor be deceived, we find in this promise sufficient evidence that he did that day descend into hell.

There are other texts which we could adduce as proofs of this doctrine, but we trust that it is not necessary to say more on this head. It will be more profitable to dwell on the important use which we may make of it practically as disciples of Christ. And may the Holy Spirit help us in the effort.

The intermediate state of souls, as the church views it, is a fixed one, and not to be confounded with the purgatory of the Church of Rome. In whatever condition, as regards divine judgment, a person dies, in that same condition the soul of the individual remains till the day of judgment. It is that of happiness or misery, consequent upon the life on earth; and therefore, to a certain extent, retributive; but there is no place there for repentance, and no means, therefore, by which the departed soul can change its condition; and as the soul itself cannot do it, neither can any intercession, either on earth or in the place of departed spirits, effect any change for the benefit of any of them. This is the doctrine of our branch of the church, and it is sound scriptural doctrine. The condition of departed souls is fixed, we say, at death; but not by divine judgment, for that cannot take place till after the resurrection: the Holy Scripture assures us, that we shall all be judged in the body, for the deeds done in the body. There is a spiritual, as well as a natural body. But it will not appear until the final resurrection; and hence, as the eternal retribution must be in the body, it cannot be in the place of departed spirits before the resurrection, for then there is no body. Nevertheless, the state of the soul, which continues active in the interval between death and the resurrection, will be happy or miserable, according to its condition on earth, in the natural body, as redeemed or not by the blood of Christ. At the very moment when the breath is leaving the body, and the soul is either reaching after the consummation of Christian hope, or shrinking from the apprehended wrath of God, its destiny for weal or woe is determined. Separated from the flesh, in which it had its sinfulness, its temptations,

its conquests or defeats, it lives on in conscious identity, cheered by the joyful hope of eternal blessedness in the resurrection body, or scourged by the memory of despised offers of grace, and the horrid visions of coming wrath.

The soul being immortal, we might conclude that it would be active always, even in the abode of the departed, if we had no testimony of Scripture on the subject. But our Lord has opened to our gaze the hell to which he descended, in the thrilling picture of the rich man and Lazarus: joy and torment are there presented side by side, and yet the souls are in the intermediate state between death and the resurrection. No judgment has yet been pronounced, but as, according to the maxim, that "whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap," the wicked find a harvest of sorrow, and the righteous one of joy, even on earth: so, in the world of spirits, they continue to rejoice or suffer, each living in his own element as it were eternally.

Oh! what but the pen of inspiration can set forth, in anything like an appreciable form, the glory or the shame of that intermediate state! It is a foretaste of all the bliss or the misery which will be the award of final judgment. Let no one delude himself with the notion that he will pass at death to a long and indefinite state of slumber, unconscious of the past, free from apprehension of the future. Let no wicked person suppose that if he refuses life everlasting through Christ, he will be doomed to destruction of body and soul, to utter annihilation, that the death pangs once met and wrestled with, all will be over forever. Well would it be for the hardened sinner if it were so; and gladly would we, if we could, give the wicked the comforting assurance, that they would find eternal rest at death. For none but a vindictive spirit can desire the endless torment of the worst of God's creatures. Punishment in this world is remedial; the threatening of it in another world, is also remedial. The punishment itself, while it is retributive as the award of a righteous Judge, is also the necessary product of a free but wicked agency in each individual sinner. The justice of God, and the dignity of man, frail as he is, demand that it should be so.

Let every sinner improve his time of trial here on earth, for there can be no change of destiny after death: the account for eternity must be settled now. How much strength this doctrine adds to the appeals of the gospel, to those who cannot see

enough in the comfort of faith in this life, to induce them to accept the salvation which it offers; for the reward of faith, and the purchase of unbelief seem near at hand, and accordingly have a greater power over the mind than they could have, if indefinitely removed. Our hopes and fears are weakened by the remoteness of the objects. We commend this doctrine to you, my hearers, urging you to consider that as soon as your pulse has ceased to beat, and you are no longer numbered with the living, you will enter a state of bliss or wo, which will have no end, but will be increased, after the day of judgment, to a degree that you cannot now conceive: yes, this is the conclusion from the proper use of the doctrine of the body;—so shall the soul of every believer in Him survive the body's death. As the soul of Christ descended into hell, so shall the soul of every believer in him descend into it. There, like his, it will remain active, but it will not be left there forever. The time will come when He who could not be holden of death long enough to see corruption, will say to those who have seen it, "Go forth from this prison," and they who are Christ's at his coming will share the glory of his resurrection in the heaven which he has opened to all believers.

If, then, you believe in Christ, and with an humble trust in him for pardon and acceptance, live in the hope of eternal life, you will have at your last hour the cheering tokens of Christ's presence, the promise of a place in paradise, and after the resurrection, in the heaven where his glory dwelleth. But if you live in unbelief, and die unforgiven, you will immediately be plunged into misery which will be without end, and without change, except that fearful one which will come when Christ shall pronounce your doom. Be sure that you are Christ's faithful disciples here on earth, partake of his death in its atoning efficacy, that you may partake of his resurrection of endless bliss in his heavenly kingdom.

SERMON XLIX.

EASTER.

“Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?”—MARK xvi. 3.

THE first eastern sun which cast its beams over this sun-darkened earth had just risen, when the good women, who had been the loving disciples of Jesus of Nazareth, came with pious purpose to his sepulchre. They had brought sweet spices, and come to embalm his body. But their work of love could not be done; the only anointing for the burial of Jesus was done beforehand, by that Mary who broke the box of precious ointment of spikenard, and poured it on his head. And even this was grudged as waste, by those who could not estimate a pious woman's love. These women, two of whom were Marys, a name hallowed by association with our Lord's whole history, had seen him crucified; and with sadness and sorrow had beheld the tomb in which Joseph of Arimathea had laid his body. It was a new one hewn out of a solid rock, (in the side of a hill) and a large stone, too heavy for them to move, was rolled against the mouth of the tomb. It had been sealed, by order of Pilate, to prevent the stealthy removal of the body. In their eagerness to be very early at the place of burial, they had not reflected that the sepulchre would be found closed against them, and thus their pious purpose frustrated. It was not until they came in sight of the place, that this difficulty occurred to them. Then they said among themselves, “Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?” Here was new sorrow, and new disappointment. They had trusted in Jesus as their Messiah: his death by the hands of his enemies had dashed their

high hopes. They looked not for his resurrection; and now the sad comfort of anointing the dead body of their loved Master is denied them.

In this sad frame they looked longingly towards the sepulchre, "and when they looked they saw that the stone was rolled away." Now amazement fills their minds. What can have happened to their Lord? They enter the sepulchre, and are affrighted at the appearance of a young man, clothed in a long white garment, sitting on the right side. He said to them, "Be not affrighted! Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified; he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him."

Now who rolled away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? Who opened the tomb of the buried Jesus, and set him free? No human hand broke the seal of the grave. The power of God shook the earth, and unclosed the sepulchre; and He who was borne thither dead, walked forth in life, and appeared to his wondering disciples. He who said to his disciples, "I have power to take again the life which I lay down," thus established his claim to reverence as a mighty Saviour; of him it was foretold that he should not see corruption,—that while he must submit to death, he would overcome death, gain the victory over the conqueror of mankind. And as he declared himself to be "the Resurrection and the Life," he stood forth among the living, even among those who buried him, leaving an open sepulchre to all who long for immortality, as a pledge of his power to deliver them from death's eternal dominion.

Having shown the direct application of the words of our text, in the incidents of sacred history, we may remark, that they very fitly express the yearnings of the human heart for deliverance from the bondage of death. And these yearnings may be considered, first in reference to mankind untaught by divine revelation. Men knew that they must die, long before they knew that they would live again. As they looked forward to the grave, with a shudder at the darkness which enveloped it, the instinctive longings for some light to dispel that darkness, could not be repressed. The more they cultivated their intellect, the larger their sphere of action here on earth, the more of labour, care, and study, with their accumulated stores, the ancient heathens had to bury in the tomb; the more eagerly they longed for some deliverer who should unbar its closed door, and

show them a free passage to a new life. All that this life had of knowledge, or joy, of domestic, social, or even selfish delight, honour, or advantage, must be buried as in the recesses of an impenetrable rock. A huge stone closes the narrow entrance. Alas, "Who shall roll away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?"

The world has ever hoped for a deliverer who should overcome death. Its hopes have found expression in various fancies: they have rested on heroes, law-givers, and priests. The Greek mythology represented in a striking manner the same longing, which was never satisfied till the inspired apostles preached "Jesus and the resurrection."

The twelfth, and last labour of the fabled Hercules, was the bringing away of the monster Cerberus, who guarded the entrance to the dwelling of departed spirits; thus overcoming death by letting them go from the realms of death. Now all the unconscious prophecies of the heathen world, as well as the divinely inspired ones of the old revelation, point to such a deliverer as Jesus became; and in their respective degree and forces serve to confirm our faith in the claim of Jesus, when revealed as the Saviour from eternal death. For, on the Easter morn which we this day celebrate, they were all fully satisfied when the apostles of Jesus went forth, witnesses to all the world, with the triumphant testimony, "We have seen the Lord; he is indeed risen."

They saw and believed. "Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed!" The stone is rolled away from the door of the sepulchre, which held the buried hopes and joys of a world which shrank with shuddering dread from death's eternal embrace.

To give now an individual application to the words of our text, let us show them as the fit expression of the heart's demand in time of bereavement. Here there is no room for speculation; no place for the poetry which gave birth to the fables of a world feeling after tokens of a possible resurrection. The realities of individual distress caused by the broken ties of a once happy domestic relation, come home to us all. We must all be called to part with some who are dear to us; the very ordinance of God, which has set the solitary in families, and thus enlarged the measure of joy to man, mingles the bitter with the sweet, in the

household cup. They who have fondly cherished in their inmost heart, the beings whom God in his providence has joined with them, are doomed to the deep sorrow of separation by the stroke of death. It is a grievous thing, to lay in the cold earth the form of beauty, or of loveliness, to which we have clung as to a part of ourselves: time may, and doubtless will, reconcile us to our loss; for we have by nature, an adaptability to the various circumstances of life;—but so long as the sorrow saddens the heart, and furrows the cheek,—so long as the mourning spirit hovers about the sepulchre which holds the treasure snatched from our grasp, the cry of distress will be, “Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?” Who will give us back the dead to life again? The stricken ones feel their utter helplessness. Oh! what a weight rests upon the grave which holds our beloved! Who shall lift it off and set the prisoner free?

Poor mourner, look at the grave with the eye of faith: see the stone rolled away by the Lord Jesus, who will bring to life the dead, through the power of his own resurrection. The patient believer, when he awakes after the sleep of death “in the likeness of his Lord,” will be a happy witness of the unclosing of the grave, and sharer of the victory of him who opened it.

Oh, then, you children of fallen parents, doomed to death yourselves, and to the sorrow of bereavement, through the liability to death of all who are dear to you, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and train your children in the same faith, and strive to win to it all who are knit to you by the bonds of love; then will He who is “the Resurrection and the Life,” be near to you always with his tender consolation. Then when you lay in the bosom of the earth, the body of one whom you claimed as a part of yourself, you will but sow the seed which will burst forth in a spiritual growth, that shall partake of the divine glory of death’s mighty Victor.

III. We find a third application of our text, to the cry of nature, in each member of the human family at the prospect of death. In the daily record of man’s history, we find some proof of his mortality. The sun-set of each day has its corresponding decline in the life-day of some of death’s victims. No age is exempt from the stroke by which the stronger fells the strong.

And be the warning of that stroke longer or shorter, the stricken one, in the maturity of intellect at last, looks with a shrinking, and shuddering dread at the grave, as a dark and gloomy place closed against all egress, sealed by authority which he cannot dispute: leaving out the few cases of those who are ripe for heaven, and considering mankind at large, as absorbed in the cares or pleasures of life, and bound to it with a strong grasp, we may view each one who feels that he is making rapid strides "towards that bourne from which no traveller returns," as uttering from his heart the cry for deliverance from the coming captivity. The communings with his own troubled spirit would find expression in words like these. "Must we, with all our garnered stores of wisdom and knowledge, our cherished joys, and hopes of bliss to come in this world of action, be laid in the sepulchre whose barred doors no friendly hand may open?"

"We will bear the tug and strife of life under all its vicissitudes, blasted hopes of gain, honour, influence or power, will not wholly crush us; while there is life there is room for hope, and space for energy. Sickness that does not kill, has for us little terror. Pain, however great, endured for love of life, and to check its flight, we will receive with all possible fortitude: the conscious possession of that existence which is of earth, and which alone we know will nerve us for trial,—leave us this, but keep back the dark and dread bondage of the grave. 'Oh, who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?' Who shall deliver us from the doom of passing away from the earth, to be known no more upon it forever,—to go we know not where?" And with what a sharp pang, the same cry of human nature breaks from one whose life is fast ebbing away,—a life spent in folly and forgetfulness of God, when the film is on the eye, and the cold damp of death is on the brow, and the darkness of death is just shrouding the senses with its thick pall, who shall dispel this darkness, and sustain the sinking soul?

Oh, if the dismayed spirit had been wont to realize that man is both mortal and immortal, and to heed the teaching of the Lord, who hath brought life and immortality to light in the gospel, all would be well! If the love of Christ the Saviour, such love as moved sorrowing women to visit him in death, dwell in the heart of the dying one, he would see in the open and empty sepulchre of the crucified Saviour, a pledge of final triumph over

death, of eternal life and blessedness to every true believer. The same divine power by which he rolled away the stone from the door of his own tomb, and mocked the power of the Prince of darkness, will bring again from death all who trust in him, and lead them to the glory and the bliss purchased by his willing submission to the death which he overcame.

To all the cases mentioned, therefore, the text has its appropriate application. The speculative mind, reaching after a revelation of light upon a dark future, the yearnings after immortality in all of human kind, the pangs of sorrow calling for a soothing balm, and the shriek of the appalled soul on the brink of the grave, all may find satisfying truth in the testimony of the evangelist, in regard to the women who came to embalm the body of Jesus, that "when they looked, they saw the stone rolled away from the door of the sepulchre," and that on entering, they heard an angel say, "He is not here! He is risen." Let every believer in the crucified, buried, and risen Lord, rejoice this day in the sure testimony of God's word, and the hope founded thereon;—the assured hope of a share in his resurrection. "For, if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them, also, who sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him." The open sepulchre is a pledge of an open heaven. Christ ascended on high, and hath opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

If then, dear hearers, you have faith in the divine Redeemer, who hath led captivity captive, let this glad festival be to you an Easter of high hope, of ardent praise, of thankful pious recollection, of unreserved homage and devotion. If you are his disciples indeed, he will cheer and comfort you with the evidences of his resurrection: the weeping Marys of his church will find him near them in their sad retreats; the travellers on the road of life, who earnestly, and lovingly, speak of him by the way-side, will be blessed with his holy converse, opening their understandings, that they may know the word of salvation. To the sincere but bewildered doubter, even, he will offer the clearest proofs of his claims to be a true Saviour.

Let, therefore, the joyous tidings, "The Lord is risen," be echoed by every heart; and let the lesson taught by this truth of the gospel sink deep into every heart. "He died for our sins, and rose again for our justification,—for in that he died, he

died unto sin once;—but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise, reckon ye also yourselves to be dead, indeed, unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

The Easter sun, while its rising beams pour brightness upon every pious soul, redeemed by a crucified Lord, illumines the page of God’s word spread out before the children of God in Christ Jesus, and brings into bold relief, “the letter which killeth,” if it be not kept. Be yours, brethren, the newness of life unto which ye were baptized, if ye have been sealed with the holy sacrament of baptism; and if not, may you soon be baptized into the death of Christ, that you may have both the pledge and the remembrance of the divine covenant. Die unto sin, that you may live unto righteousness; and when the last trump shall break the silence of the grave, may you pass through the sepulchre which Christ has opened to a resurrection to eternal glory!

SERMON L.

TRINITY SUNDAY.—CHRIST'S HUMILIATION.

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”—PHILIPPIANS ii. 5-8.

WE often hear the complaint, that discourses from the pulpit are too doctrinal, and not sufficiently practical. But such a complaint, though it may be justified in particular instances, commonly proceeds from an erroneous notion of the true mode of preaching the gospel. For if we look at the style of apostolical preaching, we shall find that the great doctrines of Christianity were always kept prominent, though they were always turned to a practical advantage. In this respect, indeed, the apostles of our Lord are not so closely imitated as they might be, by all who now preach the gospel. To be always unfolding the doctrines of the New Testament, without ever showing the tendency and proper use of these doctrines, would be an unprofitable labour. They all have a practical tendency and use, and none of them are taught merely to inform the mind, and give exercise to the reason. They are designed to mould the heart, and to direct the life; to show what God is, and what he has done for man; and also what man is, and what he must do for God and for his own soul. And in conformity to this design, the most sublime, but mysterious and unfathomable doctrines are taught, not directly, as an article of faith merely, but indirectly, to enforce some particular duty, or to recommend some particular disposition of heart. We might

enumerate several passages of Scripture to illustrate this remark, but the diligent reader of the New Testament, cannot fail to perceive so distinct a feature in the character of the apostolic writings. And the example of the first teachers of our religion, might be very properly followed in this matter, even if we did not regard it as the best mode of presenting truth, which we certainly do. Indeed, it is impossible to give any discourse a powerful practical character, without founding it upon some important doctrine. How else shall an appeal be enforced? But we have said that such was the apostolical practice. And it is true. So directly are the doctrines associated with the duties and affections which are enjoined by the Scriptures, that in a disputed text the meaning of the text, and of course the doctrine it conveys, may be determined by the precepts which it is designed to enforce.

The text before us is one to which this remark will fully apply. It contains a clear and express declaration of the divinity of Christ, and is one of the plain proofs of the doctrine of the Trinity; yet it is the obvious design of St. Paul, not to teach this sublime doctrine, in order to establish his converts in the true faith, but to enforce one of the Christian graces. And the mode in which he introduces a doctrine of such importance, is not only worthy of especial consideration, as an illustration of the proper and useful blending of the doctrinal with the practical in religious teaching; but is also calculated to convince of their unreasonableness, those who expect to find in the Scriptures the same formal creed which is adopted by the church. These last may be led to perceive that in their epistles to the various churches, the apostles did not undertake to teach systematic theology—they only wrote to establish in certain doctrines, those who were in danger of being led astray, or to inculcate certain precepts which were of general obligation indeed, but which it behooved them, perhaps, especially to practise, under the circumstances in which they were then placed. It must be borne in mind by all who are searching the Scriptures for doctrines, that the epistles being written to churches already planted and indoctrinated, presuppose a knowledge of all the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. These had been taught orally in their midst; and they are only sometimes exhibited anew, to remove doubts, if any had been excited by false teachers, or incidentally mentioned to enforce holy living,

or some one of the virtues which constitute it; as in the portion of Scripture which we have taken for our text.

In this text the Christian grace, humility, is enforced by the example of Christ; and the example adduced, teaches the sublime truth, which gives to the doctrine of salvation through faith in Christ, its chief power to sway and comfort the soul. Christ is here represented, as "God dwelling in the flesh," for man's spiritual redemption; as a Saviour, "who, being in the form of God, and equal with God, made himself of no reputation; and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." He emptied himself of his former glory, (the glory which he had before the world was,) and submitted voluntarily to the greatest humiliation in the form of manhood. For he did not stop at the humility of incarnation; but being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself by obedience unto death. Nor was this all. There was one form of death shameful above all others in the eyes of the world, and in its agony more bitter than all; and that was the consummation of his work of redemption, the perfection of his self-humiliation. He submitted to death upon the cross. He descended from a throne of glory to a cross of shame. He went down to the lowest depths of humiliation, that he might rise to the highest glory with the nature which he had assumed. Such at least was the result of his humiliation. For the apostle says: "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name."

Now all the doctrines of Scripture have their practical use. All the sublime mysteries of the Christian religion, the divinity and eternal existence of Christ, and the distinct personality of the Holy Ghost, who, with the Father and the Son, constitute the glorious Trinity; even these great doctrines of revelation, unfathomable by reason, but capable of being grasped by a pure and simple faith, are designed to be influential upon the heart and life. The same truth is presented in various aspects, to produce various effects, all tending ultimately to the glory of God, but directly to the well-being of the believer's own soul. The eternal sonship of Christ, is a relation which sets forth the greatness of God's love for man, since he gave that Son for the redemp-

tion of such a sinful being. It shows how dear and precious in the sight of God are the souls of his rebellious creatures, and hence how wicked and unpardonable is their continued rebellion. It challenges their grateful love, and demands that they should please so gracious a God, by accepting the happiness which he seeks to bestow upon them forever. The revelation of the same truth, presents Christ to the mind of a sinful mortal as a Saviour who is essentially divine, and therefore so great and powerful, as "if he be for us, who can be against us?" If he be our Advocate and Surety, we need not fear any adversary, since "he is able to save to the uttermost," all who put their trust in him. The practical influence of this view of Christ, is to lead the sinner to cast himself unreservedly and with entire trust, upon the saving power of his meritorious sacrifice. And this is he urged to do. The same doctrine sets forth the love of Christ for the whole family of man, which passes comprehension, since it moved him to make so vast a sacrifice for their redemption. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." But Christ did more than this. He first laid down the glory which he had with the Father, stooped from a state of heavenly glory and bliss, in which he shared, with the Father of all, the homage of the angelic host, to a life of human suffering, of unrequited labour and benevolence; of patient magnanimous forbearance, which drew upon him contempt and derision. To a life such as this, in human form and sensibility, did the Lord from heaven submit; which was a sacrifice great enough, we might suppose, to excite man's love for him, and great enough to purchase redemption, if without shedding of blood there could be any remission of sins. But according to the appointment of God this could not be; and He who had already submitted so low, had one more downward step to take. He freely bowed himself to death upon the cross.

Herein is the love of Christ magnified; and hereby are the love and reverence and heartfelt homage of man for this Saviour, most powerfully and affectingly claimed. Here is mysterious doctrine, which many think inefficacious, and alas! permit it to be so; calling for deep and lasting practical results. This Saviour who, being divine, is able to save to the uttermost all who put their trust in him; is also willing so to do, and eager so to do, as he

has shown by his wonderful condescension, and inestimable sacrifice. How much is Christ's claim to love and obedience enhanced by this great humiliation! And how greatly is the guilt aggravated of those who continue in sin, in spite of such a manifestation of divine love and mercy! The same doctrine which displays the magnitude of mercy, does at the same time equally display the enormity of sin. The cross of Christ, so precious to the humble penitent believer, is terrible to the obstinate unbeliever. It saves the one, but it condemns the other.

The doctrine of our text is often set forth to excite the impenitent to faith and contrition, and the believing to perseverance in well-doing, or to a life of holiness through love of the Saviour. But it is in this instance stated by the apostle, as an enforcement of a particular grace, humility. "Let this mind be in you," my brethren, "which was also in Christ Jesus," who has given such an unparalleled instance of self-humiliation. This is the exhortation to you, my hearers, as it was to the Philippians. By this, or by whatever motive enforced, humility is a grace which every Christian should cultivate, and indeed must exercise; for it is the very mould of the Christian character. It must be exercised towards God, surely; for all the doctrines of the Christian religion are calculated to inspire a sentiment of deep humility and unworthiness. A conviction of sin demands it; and the assurance of acceptableness unto God through the merits of Christ, and him alone, must surely inspire it: the very hope of redemption is inseparable from it.

And a just sense of our condition in the sight of God, and our relation to him, will readily promote an humble disposition and deportment towards our fellow men. For since we are all brought so low by sin, and the terms of redemption from it, how can we assume any superiority to our fellow sinners? Since they are equally with ourselves the objects of divine mercy, and dependent upon divine grace, and are thus surely upon a level with us, shall we not treat them as equals, and carry ourselves humbly towards them? But Christians are commanded to observe the precepts, and to follow the example of the Lord Jesus. Some of those precepts, and much of the force of that example, enjoin and inculcate such a deportment as is recommended by St. Paul, in the text now under consideration. Nor can any one be a perfect Christian without having and showing a good degree of humility. For

this spirit is absolutely necessary to the reception of Christianity as the rule of life, and the hope of eternity. Pride is the besetting sin of man; it is this which closes the avenues to the heart against the wholesome truths of the gospel. A man must feel and acknowledge his wants, before he can submit to the application of certain and effectual relief, by the hands of another. And in order to do this, he must form a just estimate of himself. Humility is at once the cause and effect of this self-knowledge. But it is of difficult attainment. The natural heart swells with pride, and feels sure that it can attain that perfection, which it reluctantly confesses that it has come short of. This is the evil spirit which leads a man about whither it will, into the depth of despair, and unto the height of impiety: the world is slow to acknowledge his claims, or unable to satisfy his desires; and in the offer of peace by the gospel, there is too much grace, too much dependence; he wanders about seeking rest, but he finds none, till he is truly humble, and then he may be seen "sitting at the feet of Jesus in his right mind." Nor is there anything degrading in true humility. Oh no; the practical tendency of the doctrine of man's redemption, which called forth such an exhibition of character as our text presents, is clearly to show the connexion between humility and true dignity. The Son of God descended from his glory, that he might, after his humiliation, return with human nature glorified by his act of condescension. Love and compassion for a condemned and perishing world prompted the sacrifice, and a name above every name, the homage and gratitude of ransomed millions, constitute a portion of the reward which accrued to it.

So Christian humility, planted in the heart of man by the Holy Spirit, leads him to forego present advantage for the sake of future glory; or rather in obedience to the will of his Lord, and with the encouraging assurance of future reward. It leads him, too, to such a deportment towards his fellow-men, as his divine Master manifested towards his disciples, and so constantly inculcated in his teaching. Who is not familiar with his exhortations on this subject? How plain and forcible are his parables! Who is not struck with the force of "the parable of the pharisee and the publican" in the act of prayer, and if he have any of the spirit of Christ, has not the witness in himself of the superior blessedness of that pious humility, which prompted the petition, "God,

be merciful to me a sinner," in comparison with the unholy arrogance which said, "I thank thee, that I am not as other men are?" And as Christ taught, so he constantly practised humility. He became a servant to those who should have ministered unto him. He, though "Lord of all, was as one who served." All his life was a continued exemplification of that spirit which prompted his incarnation, and was perfected in his death. The language of sinners should surely be, "If Christ stooped so low for us, so unworthy, ought not we to condescend to the lowest offices of love to our fellow sinners?" And they have the great encouragement of their Lord's assurance, that he who would be greatest in the kingdom of heaven, should be least of all on earth. My brethren, cultivate that feeling, so essential to the Christian character, which was displayed so signally, and inculcated so strongly, by our Lord Jesus Christ. Let the same mind be in you which was also in him, that as God hath given him "a name above every name," so you may, through him, be exalted to great glory in his heavenly kingdom.

How powerfully the truth here exhibited speaks to all, whether professed believers or not! Are you a believer, and not an humble one? Consider your calling. A proud Christian! This would be a contradiction in terms. Has not the gospel declared that high and low, rich and poor, all are one in Christ? Did not Christ submit to the lowest form of manhood, and do this for the humblest of the creatures whose nature he took? And must not the proudest of all bow just as low before God, ere they can have hope of eternal life, as any one of those whom they presume to despise? Oh, if ever a proud Christian reaches the abodes of the blessed, how will his pride be visited with retribution, when the Saviour says to the despised one, in his presence, "Friend, go up higher!"

Ah! believe me, this giving place before the assembled world, and gazing angels, to one whom you have scorned on earth, (though he bore the image of Christ which you professed to love,) will be a shame that will far outweigh all your miserable self-exalting! Consider what you are in the sight of God; and then you will learn to live humbly before him. Reflect that the highest honour ever put upon human nature, was shown in the act of condescension set forth in our text; the incarnation of Christ for the redemption of the world. And this honour is shared with the highest by the lowest of mankind.

Humble yourselves, therefore, (Christians) before God, whose mercy is your only hope, and before your fellow men, who, as the subjects of that mercy, are surely on a level with you—for you are all equally in the dust. Pride not yourselves on any of the distinctions of social life; not on your riches, for Christ chose to be poor that we might, through his poverty, be rich. Boast not of rank. The highest heraldry of man is made up of the titles which Christ bestows upon his humble followers. And of these the humblest have the best. He that would be greatest in the kingdom of heaven, let him be least on earth. This is Christ's teaching. If you are Christ's, give heed to it.

We bring the striking truth declared in our text, to the view of those who are not professed Christians. We mean those who have not yet avouched Christ to be their Saviour. Are you too proud to submit to Christ; to confess that you are guilty in God's sight, condemned by his law, and unable to gain his favour? And can you bear yourselves stiffly and proudly before a Saviour, who has set you such a glorious example of humility? Christ humbled himself thus for your sakes. Will you not humble yourselves for your own? He made a confession of your sinfulness, which never can be gainsaid, when he stooped to the sufferings of humanity, and the sacrifice of the cross. It will stand till time shall be no more. You must confess both your sin and your repentance, together with faith in this atoning sacrifice of the self-humbled Son of God, or the sublime testimony of Christ will only deepen your condemnation. The crown of glory which Christ will wear on the throne of his mediatorial kingdom, (the throne to which his humiliation raised him,) will glitter with proofs of your guilt, which will burn like fire into the soul, unless you can have his word of assurance, that you have acknowledged him as a Saviour.

Strive to secure his eternal favour; his intercession with the Father; his plea of vicarious suffering for the penitent believer. You are sinners, you feel it; condemned sinners, you know it. Repent and believe, and be pardoned sinners. Be ashamed of sin, and not of Christ, the ransom for it. Boast of nothing but the cross. Submit to all the requirements of Christ's religion. Humble yourselves in the sight of God as sinners. Know the Lord Jesus as believers in his prevailing merits; and, in the world to come, you will share in the glory which will be the reward of his humiliation.

SERMON LI.

THANKSGIVING DAY.

“I will mention the loving-kindnesses of the Lord.”—ISAIAH lxiii. 7.

SUCH words of grateful recollection may very properly be spoken by many others besides Israel's prophet, speaking the praises of Israel's God. They were indeed the especial people of God, chosen from the nations of the earth, to be the keepers of his oracles, the depositaries of his promises, the partakers of his covenanted mercies, the church of the Most High God, from whom should spring the founder of the church catholic, which would be built upon better promises—the covenant of grace to all nations. And the blessings which they enjoyed were so evidently traceable to the hand of God; involved such palpable displays of his providence, that, as there was no room for irreligious doubts, so there was no justification for any want of pious gratitude. Herein they differed from all other people who have enjoyed the loving-kindness of the Lord, and who therefore owe him a grateful acknowledgment. But the difference is only in degree. There is no nation, and no individual of any nation, who has not received many proofs of God's mercy and goodness, and who does not owe praise and thanksgiving to the Being who is the source of every blessing. Whether temporal or spiritual blessings be considered, and whether these be viewed by us as individuals, or as a nation, or as a church, we may find abundant cause for devout gratitude in the recollection of God's dealings with us. And on this day of yearly thanksgiving, appointed by the civil authority of our commonwealth, and which we substitute

for that which is prescribed by the church, we can with especial fitness consider our many blessings, and consequent obligations. The church provides a "Form of Prayer and Thanksgiving to Almighty God for the fruits of the earth, and all the other blessings of his merciful providence." And the executive recommendation of this religious festival, recognises the claims of divine goodness to the united thank-offerings of a people who have been abundantly blessed. Throughout our own state, as well as in every other portion of our common country, health and plenty have prevailed; peace and happiness have marked us as the favoured people of God. All that God has sent us has been good. The evil which has been in our midst or around us, has been of our own making. The past year has been marked by an unusual exemption from malignant disease, whose ravages in this city have sometimes been fearful.

We have also to reckon among our blessings, the continued enjoyment of social and religious privileges. As a people, we find in the record of the past year many tokens of God's favour, of which we have been too undeserving. As a church, we can rejoice in the sure evidences of prosperity—zeal for the cause of Christ—earnest striving for the truth—minds quickened into activity and watchfulness, and hearts cemented with love, all tending to the spread of gospel light and peace throughout our land. Since, then, God has guided us through another year, by his merciful providence, and has crowned it with his goodness, in the full garnering of the fruits of labour, not only of the husbandman, but also of the manifold callings of the industrial classes of men, let us offer him, as if of the first fruits, the sacrifice of thanksgiving. And while as a people we call up in review, with heartfelt praise, the many national blessings which are our goodly heritage; and as a church we thank God, and take courage for the coming strife with error and wickedness, let us, each one for himself, at this time mention the loving-kindnesses of the Lord, with a view to determine the claims of the Lord to our devout gratitude.

It becomes every one at all times, and it is a very fit occasion now, to sum up God's mercies, and to mention them to himself, as incentives to habitual piety—to his fellow men, as proofs of God's universal goodness, demanding of them also a tribute of praise, and to God the great Benefactor, in testimony of thankful

acknowledgment of favours which are more than could be deserved, and greater than can be estimated. We should recount to ourselves all the blessings which we have, that we may be reminded of our constant dependence upon God's providence, and of our unworthiness of his mercies, which are new every day, and hence be led to deep humility, and to a proper improvement of all our blessings. Not a day dawns upon us, which does not find us in the possession of many sources of enjoyment, for which we should be thankful, but which we scarcely realize as blessings, till we are about to be deprived of them.

The lower orders of creation manifest a grateful recognition of kindness. How much more should the highest of God's works, lord of the others on earth! Man rises from refreshing rest and sleep, to the consciousness of continued existence of health, strength, and energy. As he goes forth in the fulness of vigour, to resume the business of life, he sees again and again the various creatures of God that were designed for his use—to minister to his wants—the abundant provision for his comfort which God's goodness has made. The sun, which gladdened his heart yesterday, greets him with wonted light and genial heat to-day. The earth puts forth its usual promise of future harvest, or yields once more its daily supply of nutriment and gratification. Many streams of comfort are flowing within his reach, inviting his free participation. These daily blessings he fails to appreciate, because their flow is uninterrupted. He regards them all as matters of course, unto which he was born, and in the use of which he will continue to live his appointed time. But for all these things he should be thankful, considering how much he receives, and that it is of God's goodness that he ever did, or does now enjoy them. But how many are there who make these things the subject of their daily meditation? How many ever heartily utter the thanksgiving in our Liturgy: "for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life?" And still smaller is the number of those who embody in this language of the lips, the constant meditation of their hearts. Do you, my Christian friends, mention to yourselves these marks of God's goodness? Do you deeply reflect upon your obligations to God for his mercies? But if the positive blessings of life do not attract your regard, look at your comparative condition. In forming your estimate of your share

of God's goodness, and of your corresponding obligations, you should compare your own condition with that of many who are far less favoured. When considering the allotments of divine providence, you should look down upon those who are beneath you, and praise God for the mercy which has caused you to differ from them. In estimating your character, on the contrary, you should look upward, that you may perceive, and be ready to acknowledge your deficiencies. This proper rule is too often reversed. If, then, you are in the full enjoyment of health and strength, and the various comforts which health and competence can afford, you should contemplate the condition of those who are tossed on the bed of sickness, or are subject to constant infirmity of bodily health, added to the distressing wants of poverty. And as you rejoice in the consciousness of your happier lot, be sure that your joy be mingled with gratitude to the Giver of all good, and with a warm sympathy for all for whom he has ordained sorrow and distress. And let that gratitude and that tender sympathy be shown in your desire and your effort to relieve the destitute, and comfort the distressed, believing that God sends sickness and suffering for the trial of others besides the sufferers—to prove the patient resignation of these chiefly, but likewise, in no small degree, the Christian benevolence of their fellow men. Let this be done from a sense of religious obligation, as an offering of devout gratitude. Not merely turn aside from your path, like the good Samaritan, to comfort those whom you may chance to meet, but seek opportunities of showing compassion and charity, as disciples of Him who will acknowledge it as done unto himself, if it be done in his name, and in obedience to his precepts. While thus employed, you may mention to yourselves, “the loving-kindnesses of the Lord,” to stimulate your heart to the liveliest gratitude.

Such is the spirit with which we should call to mind the peculiar temporal blessings which we enjoy. And even if our condition is not so comfortable as that of most persons, we should still compare it with that of those who are less favoured than ourselves. We should consider that we owe every thing to God's goodness, and that we deserve nothing good at his hand. We should always reflect how much we have to be thankful for, rather than how much we might have more than we possess. If you

have been afflicted by the Lord—if you have safely passed through sickness or other distress, call to mind the loving-kindness of the Lord, which has restored you to health and happiness. If life is very precious to you—if you are bound to it by ties which could not be severed without a bitter struggle, and especially if you could not have met death with peaceful hope and quiet resignation, in view of your soul's destiny, then you owe devout gratitude and continual thanksgiving to a merciful God. Be careful, then, to recount to your own souls, while in health and happiness, the mercies which you have received, whether they consist in an entire exemption from sickness and sorrow, or in an effectual deliverance from either or both. Mention them also to others, that they may be led to a like estimate and appreciation of their mercies. And mention them to God in humble and pious recollection of all his benefits.

Having dwelt long upon temporal blessings, we have little time for the consideration of spiritual comforts and privileges. We could not indeed in a single discourse, give this subject its full measure of earnest consideration. The bare mention, however, of that which it would be unbecoming to omit, may open sources of reflection which will be profitable to all. The first feeling which moves and fills the heart, is that of amazement at the love and long-suffering goodness of our heavenly Father! We cannot approach the subject without crying out in the language of the psalmist, "Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him!" For what is our condition? Consider, and make mention of God's loving-kindness.

While living in the midst of so many temporal blessings, of which we are too apt to be utterly unmindful, receiving proofs of God's love and superintending providence, heedless of the admonitions of conscience directing us to godliness, we are taught by divine revelation how depraved we are, and how good our God has been to us. We are assured of what we might readily have supposed, that we came from a corrupt stock, and that we inherited a natural tendency to sin, which, if left to take its course, would have brought us to eternal woe. With this assurance, which alone might have overwhelmed us with despair, we have another precious one, that God has, through an appointed Saviour, blotted out the remembrance of original sin, and granted us redemption

and eternal life. God has not cast us off forever, but has given us the surest pledges of his unfailing love, and of his desire to win us back to duty and peace. He comes to us in his word, with the promise of everlasting blessedness to those who will return to obedience, declaring that our welfare consists in obedience. As a proof of his love for us, and of his earnest desire to recall us from our lost state, he sent his only and well beloved Son into the world, to die for us, that, sin being expiated, he might freely pardon sinners, without allowing sin.

Through faith in this appointed sacrifice, the Lord Jesus Christ, human in his sufferings, divine in power and grace, all who will receive him as their Saviour, will be pardoned on repentance, and will have an assurance of eternal life, if they persevere in the faith unto the end. They have also the promise of the Holy Spirit, the divine Comforter, whose ever-present and ready help will enable the believer to obtain that holiness which is the proper manifestation of discipleship on earth, and will be the glory and the joy of the redeemed in heaven. All we who have passed under the yoke of sin, whose doom is eternal banishment from God, are taught by the Lord Jesus Christ, and through him to address God, the holy, just, and Almighty, as our Father, whose dwelling is in heaven; and also by right of appropriation, which we have through faith in our hearts, comforting, purifying, and saving us. By this adoption, through the merits of our Lord, we have peace with God, being restored to his favour, and having a good hope of everlasting blessedness. The offer of this spiritual peace and joyful hope, is made to all men in the precious gospel. Should not all therefore acknowledge this greatest proof of God's mercy, and say with truth and earnestness, in reference to it, "I will mention the loving-kindness of the Lord!" Let every one say this to his own soul.

If you have embraced the gracious offer, and found joy and peace in believing, lift up your heart in devout gratitude to God, for this his unspeakable gift. And let the recollection of God's mercies, lead you to show forth the praise of your Redeemer, by a constant exhibition of the fruits of the Spirit, and to tell unto others what the Lord hath done for your soul. Call upon them, in the language of the psalmist, to "Come, taste, and see that the Lord is gracious," that they may be won to Christ the Redeemer.

And let them see in your life the good fruits of the faith which you have professed—the blessedness of that willing devotion which a true sense of God's mercy inspires. Let the world perceive the constant purifying influence of the religion of Christ, that by such recommendation of it, they may glorify God, not only by acknowledging the power of his truth in you, but likewise by surrendering themselves to its influence. This is effectual praise—this is acceptable thanksgiving. We love God most, when we love to do good—the highest good to the creatures whom he loves—when we are eager to follow the example of Him who went about ministering to the wants of suffering humanity, and to put within the reach of the wretched, the consolations of that religion, which makes all suffering more tolerable, by the assurance of God's kind providence, and especially of his grace, which embraces in its scope another and a better world.

I offer no apology for dwelling at this time upon the richest tokens of God's loving-kindnesses, and for urging upon those who have not accepted them thankfully, the duty of thanksgiving for the mercy which would have saved them. We cannot avail ourselves of the high stand-point which this day affords, from which we may look over and beyond the care and the strife which belong to our social and political system, and survey the blessings which are our portion, without catching a full view of that prominent and far-reaching one, which most exalts the goodness and mercy of God. We cannot check the thoughts which go upwards, as upon Jacob's ladder, to the heavenly city, the freedom of which with all the rights of citizenship, we have received as a gift from its divine Builder. We know that "here," with all the blessings which we may thankfully mention, "we have no continuing city." And knowing this, let us, while here, have our conversation, or our citizenship, for this is the true, and full force of the word as used by the apostle, in heaven. And while with glad hearts we would ascribe praise and thanksgiving to our God, let the keystone of the arch which we would raise, be the precious one, on which is written that glorious name, the Lord our Redeemer. "Praise ye the Lord: for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant, and praise is comely." These are the words of the psalmist, which are made a part of the service for the day. And he recounts the works of the Lord for which

the praise is due. But the words of the wise utterer of Proverbs, are also brought before us by the church, in which one of the evidences of a thankful heart, as well as a fit expression of thankfulness is plainly set forth. "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase; so shall thy barns be filled with plenty." Here we have not only a duty, but its full reward as an encouragement to the discharge of it. Consecrate then a goodly share of what God has given you, to the service of God, to the cause of charity, and to the furtherance of the gospel. Then will you prove the Lord's faithfulness, and find that "there is that scattereth, and yet increaseth," and that what you cast upon the waters will return to you, with its blessed gain. Let, therefore, soul, body, and substance, be dedicated to the Lord as a thank-offering, for he is the maker of our body, the giver of all which makes up our worldly store, and the eternal Saviour of our souls. To him be all glory, honour and majesty, the praise of earth and heaven. Amen.

SERMON LII.

ON BAPTISMAL REGENERATION.

“According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.”—TITUS, iii. 5.

GREAT misapprehension of Scripture doctrine grows out of a misuse of Scripture language, and Christians are often separated by lines of distinction which recede and vanish at the approach of a careful inquiry into the meaning of terms by which ideas are expressed. Of this you have all observed many instances, we suppose. But in no case has the truth of the remark been more signally manifested, than in regard to the doctrine of regeneration.

The church catholic, or universal, has, from the days of the apostles, held the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, and because she still maintains it, she is charged, ignorantly in most cases, with denying the need of conversion, or a change of heart. But this is quite a different thing from regeneration, being a state of spiritual growth following it. This condition of character is inculcated by the church, as a necessary manifestation of faith, and a proper result of the due improvement of the privileges which constitute regeneration. And in the doctrines maintained, as well as in the language used to define them, the church conforms closely to the words of Holy Scripture, as we hope to show in the discourse to which your attention is invited.

The word regeneration, according to the use of it by the Church of England and the Protestant Episcopal Church in America, embraces in its meaning all the privileges of the covenant of grace made known in the gospel. These privileges are conveyed to us by

baptism, which Christ instituted as the seal of his covenant, being both the mean or instrument by which we receive them, and a pledge to assure us thereof. Regeneration, in its simple definition, means, "being born again." And it very properly expresses the change of state which the subjects of baptism undergo, supposing that they do become entitled thereby to all the privileges of the gospel covenant. For by being once born naturally, of corrupt parents, we are placed in a state "of enmity to God," of liability to death and sin, in which state we have no promise of God's grace, either of pardon or of holiness, and hence our removal from that state into one of peace with God, in which we have the gracious assurance of pardon and the power to become holy, being a change as great as that of becoming new creatures, is well called being once more born, or born again. The coming into a life of sinfulness and condemnation is by birth, and the coming from that life into one of justification and well grounded hope of freedom from the power of sin, is by a new birth, or regeneration. The language is borrowed from analogy, not of the mode of introduction into the state of being, but of the greatness of the change of condition. The new-born child may not be sensible of any change of condition. And so the regenerated child may have no knowledge of the benefits of the state to which the new birth admits him. But still he may be born again, as surely as he was once born; and simply because Christ has ordained the sacrament of baptism as "the mean or instrument" whereby this regeneration, or introduction to a new state of being, shall be effected. :

Let us look for a moment at the religious history of man, as given in the Holy Scriptures. We find him in paradise, a pure and upright being, created so,—and designed to be the glory of the creation. But he was made for trial, subject to temptation—with power to choose good and avoid evil. Temptation came, and he fell into condemnation. God punished him with death; but during the suspension of the punishment, gave him, for his solace, and for the binding of him under a new covenant, the promise of final salvation through a Redeemer who should be his offspring, and should in due time make a proper atonement for sin. The descendants of the sinful pair, who fell in paradise from their original purity, shared in the corrupt nature of their parents—inherited

their infirmities of mind and heart, and also shared their doom of liability to death. All the sons of Adam must die, and undergo the sufferings incident to mortality. But as an offset to these sufferings, (which the guilt of the parents brought upon the innocent children,) God provided a state of bliss far exceeding that which was forfeited by transgression, and offered it to them on certain conditions, according to his good pleasure. These were submission to his ordinances, and obedience to his precepts, the ordinances being designed as the pledges of his willingness and purpose to bestow his favour, and as helps to enable man to keep the commandments of the moral law. The promise given to the church before the time of Christ, was founded on the foreseen and foreordained sacrifice which he should offer. To the church which Christ himself established through the inspired apostles, God gave the promise of eternal life, on the ground of the offered sacrifice which was sufficient to expiate all sin, so that God could be just, and yet the justifier of all who believe in Jesus.

Now it pleased God to give certain tokens of his favour and good will, by which all who received them might be assured that they were within the reach of all the promises on the fulfilment of the conditions. The promises made by God are sure, and cannot fail, though no pledge were added. But he chose to put his seal to the declaration of his good will. All who receive this seal are specially brought within the terms of salvation, are made members of the church of Christ, and can hold up this seal, as they would present a bond to a fellow-man, with a sure claim to all the privileges which it guaranteed. Just as the holders of certain bonds, which secured to all who complied with the conditions named, special privileges, could demand the use and enjoyment of these privileges, whenever the conditions are fulfilled, and could in the meantime, comfort themselves with the assured hope of receiving them, so can those who receive baptism rightly view it as a pledge to them, that they shall have all the blessings which Christ offers to the repentant believer, on condition that they fulfil the terms on which it was given. There is this additional feature in the baptismal covenant, which distinguishes it from a common one, that the receiver of it has something in hand as an earnest of his future privileges—grace being given to enable him to secure them.

The Holy Spirit imparts the germ of spiritual life, which the faithful recipient may develop by his earnest efforts to work out his salvation. So that it will be his own fault, if he does not come to his promised inheritance. Christ bestows the gift of his grace.

“The work to be performed is ours,
The strength is all his own.”

This is fully borne out by the words of Scripture. Our Lord says, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” And he afterwards explains himself thus: “Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” Now here we wish to make two remarks, by way of clearing this passage from misapprehension. First—the kingdom of God means, as is admitted by all interpreters of Scripture, the visible church of God on earth. Secondly—the original Greek does not say, “Except a man be born again”—but except any one, the indefinite pronoun (*tis*) is used, which includes every person, children as well as adults. No person, then, can become a member of the visible church of God, under the Christian dispensation, unless he be born again, or regenerated by water and the Holy Spirit. Or, to speak affirmatively, every person born of water and the Spirit, becomes by that new birth or regeneration, a member of the visible church of Christ. Now “to be born of water,” must mean being baptized. There is no other use of water in such a way as to mark a change of state equivalent to that of being born again, except that of baptism, which is elsewhere enjoined as the indispensable mark of the Christian profession. Our Saviour says, “Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” And the commission which he gave to his apostles runs thus, “Go, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

Baptism, then, is the divinely appointed rite of admission to the church of Christ, and none can enter it without being “born again” or “regenerated,” and so baptism is the means or instrument of regeneration. St. Paul in his epistles speaks of baptism as the means by which we are brought into a state of salvation. And in our text, he says that “According to the mercy of God,

we are saved through the washing of regeneration," as one of the means, and "the renewing of the Holy Ghost," as the other. Here we have a distinct recognition of baptism as the means of regeneration, in accordance with our Lord's declaration to Nicodemus, the washing of regeneration being identical with the "being born of water," which was made requisite to admission into the visible church or covenant relation with God. And let it be remembered that this is the only place in the New Testament where the word regeneration occurs in connexion with the subject of salvation.

In only one other place is it found at all, and there it evidently means the dispensation of grace which Christ proclaimed as follows, (Mat. xix. 28.) "And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." In this connexion it has no reference whatever to the conditions of salvation. Hence we see, that in the only place where it is found capable of signifying a condition of salvation, it is joined inseparably with baptism. Let us, therefore, hear no objections to the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, as held by the church, since the church uses the very language of Scripture to express a doctrine fully supported by Scripture testimony.

But it may be asked with some show of reason, if our Lord does not expressly say that it is necessary to be born of the Spirit as well as of water in order to enter into the kingdom of God? We answer, he surely does. And the two phrases are so closely connected together, that we infer the birth by the Spirit whenever a person is truly born of water. In all cases where baptism is rightly administered according to Christ's institution, the Spirit is present to sanctify the water and make the use of it effectual to the end designed. Here is just that agency of the Spirit which is required for the purpose.

Indeed, there can be no room for mistake or doubt. Our Lord evidently speaks of baptism as the door of entrance to the church, and he speaks of it as the being born of water and the Spirit, (there is no preposition before Spirit, in the original,) as by one operation. And with this agrees St. Paul in (1st Corinthians, xii. 12, 13.) "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body."

The Spirit's agency in baptism is here directly recognised. (Acts ii. 38.)

The Holy Scriptures use the term *regeneration* to express something very different from what is usually called conversion, or change of heart. And the church only follows the Scripture in adopting it into her nomenclature. We could have no clearer illustration of this difference of signification than our text affords. "According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Here the renewing of the Holy Ghost, together with the washing of regeneration, constitute the means of our salvation. Now the church uses this phrase, "the renewing of the Holy Ghost," to express that necessary change from sin to holiness, which is called by many Christians, "regeneration" or the "regenerate state." But the church insists strongly on the necessity of this change of character, to qualify one for the final bliss of the Lord's accepted. And it is hard indeed that she should be charged with denying a scriptural doctrine, held in common with other communions, because she receives another equally scriptural one which they reject. Yet this is the case.

We hold that baptism is "the new birth by water and the Spirit," the beginning of a new spiritual life, in which we grow by the continual "renewing of the Holy Ghost." This renewing of the Holy Ghost is nothing more or less than sanctification. But birth is a very different thing from growth, continual increase not the same as beginning, grace given is not identical with grace improved. We mean by "regeneration" that change of spiritual condition effected by our being taken from our natural relation to God, (which is one of enmity to him and exposure to his wrath, with no promise of favour from him,) and placed in a covenant relation, in which the promises of his favour are sealed to us on certain conditions. These conditions are repentance and faith. No person can justly claim the fulfilment of Christ's promises of pardon and eternal life, who does not cherish, by all the means afforded, that spiritual life through a union with Christ, which is bestowed in baptism.

Much as the church holds to the doctrine that baptism is the means of regeneration, she quite as strongly asserts that it is no sure guarantee of final acceptance. But in her catechism and of-

fices, she urges the necessity of a life of continual striving after holiness, with the help of the Spirit, whose influence will be, according to the pledge given in baptism, always ready to promote its progressive development. No sooner is the sanctified element applied to the person coming or brought to the font, than the prayer of the church is offered, "that all sinful affections may die, and all things belonging to the Spirit may live and grow in him, that being dead unto sin and living unto righteousness, and being buried with Christ in his death, he may crucify the old man, and utterly abolish the whole body of sin." So, on signing him with the cross, the church declares, that this is a token that he shall be the Lord's faithful soldier and servant, and fight manfully under his banner against sin, the world and the devil. And lest the necessity of cultivating holy tempers and devout affections should not yet be understood, the exhortation at the close of the baptismal office urges it again, on the ground of the significancy of the rite itself, "which represents our profession—viz. to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, that as he died and rose again, so should we, who are baptized, die unto sin and rise again unto righteousness, continually mortifying all our evil and corrupt affections, and daily proceeding in all virtue and godliness of living."

Greatly do they wrong the church who charge her with denying the need of conversion, or the turning from sin unto holiness. It is the burden of her teaching from the beginning to the end of the Prayer Book.

It is a strong inducement, moving her to bring children to baptism, that they may begin the new life, whose progress is holiness, and whose consummation is heavenly glory. Herein the pledge of grace is given by our Lord to the faithful receiver of it, and to the child, on condition that he will show repentance and faith, when he comes of age; of grace that will enable the justified one to become sanctified, to overcome the temptations of "the world, the flesh, and the devil," if he will diligently use the means afforded. Blessed "laver of regeneration," which leads to "the renewing of the Holy Ghost," both concurring in our salvation! Despise it not, my hearers, as a mere external of religion. It is full of internal meaning and spirit. And it is an external of God's own appointment, and rests on the same sanction with the atoning sacrifice of Christ. Both equally stand upon God's gracious will and

appointment. Bow to the authority, and adore the wisdom and goodness which established them both.

To those who have been regenerated in baptism, we urge the careful cherishing of those means of spiritual renovation which are your happy privileges. Christ has brought you within his fold, and given you promises of continual growth in grace, and final glory, if you will diligently strive to cultivate the seed which he has implanted. The Spirit of grace was given you to work out your salvation. Beware how you trample under foot so great a blessing. Quench not this Spirit, lest you be given over to a deadness of condition from which you can never rise. Called by a divine rite into a state of salvation, take heed that you earnestly endeavour to make your calling sure. To you Christ has come near with the gift of eternal life in his hand. No matter how early you were baptized, you received the offer of all the benefits of his merciful mediation. Yours will be the condemnation, as well as the loss, if they are not all received.

New born to an inheritance undefiled and that fadeth not away, see that you keep your title, and finally secure the possession. Members of the body of Christ, see that you defile not that body by unholiness. Called out of darkness into the light of the gospel, see that "ye walk as children of light," worthy of your calling. Taken from the midst of the world—from the state of hopeless estrangement from God, and placed in a covenant relation to him, lay hold on all the promises contained in it. That you may do this, live a life of soberness and prayer. Be not conformed to this world, whose hopes and aims are opposed to your profession, but "be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind and heart according to the will of God, through the working of the Spirit." Then will the words of our text be true in their application to you. Then may you be able to say, as you come to the verge of this life of probation, with a joyful recollection of the baptismal beginning of the spiritual state of reconciliation with God, and the happy sense of its prolonged continuance and strengthening growth, God be praised for his bountiful grace and inestimable love! "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

SERMON LIII.

ON THE RELIGIOUS TRAINING OF CHILDREN.

“Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”—PROVERBS xxii. 6.

THE true principle upon which education should be conducted, is here stated in the words of Solomon; and these few words alone, if he had left on record no other moral precepts, would have secured for him the reputation of a wise man. The statement of the principle, in the form of an exhortation, is accompanied with a promise which is designed to encourage the application of it. Whether the fulfilment of that promise may, in all cases, be expected, is a question that we are not now to settle. It may be remarked, however, here, that Solomon intended to declare the general result of a due course of religious training. There will be exceptions to any general rule in regard to moral education. Some refractory spirits will break away from the wholesome restraint of a judicious system, and will go astray as soon as they are left to their own guidance. But it will be found, nevertheless, that wherever the training has been judicious, and the system of moral culture been persevered in, consistently and uniformly, the promised result will follow.

We have said that our text sets forth the only true principle of education. No system of education is worth having that does not recognise this principle. All the volumes that have been written on the subject of education can add nothing to it. Nor are they of any practical value, except so far as they serve to explain and illustrate it. Now we might suppose, if we did not see so many examples of inconsistency in the world, so many proofs of the utter want of judgment in the management of the

young, that we needed no Solomon to teach us this. For how plain and obvious the rule,—“Train up a child in the way he should go.” Once settle it in your mind how your child should go, what the right way is, and then carefully train him up in it. How simple a principle of conduct this is! And yet how few seem to understand and apply it! And why is it? Because parents either have no settled plan, no fixed purpose in regard to the training of their offspring, or they are not honest in their professions. In most cases there is a want of plan and purpose: all is done at random. People allow their children to become the creatures of circumstances. Many, however, who profess to aim at a certain ultimate result, entirely neglect the proper means of attaining it, pursuing just the opposite of the true course. Yet how absurd must their conduct appear even to themselves, when it is held up to their view in the face of the principle laid down in our text. In the ordinary business of life, in anything but morals and religion, mankind recognise this principle and act in accordance with it, as if they were determined to err only where error is most fatal.

Consider for a moment the conduct of mankind in regard to matters of worldly interest. They do not send their sons to sea to make them mechanics, or into the camp to qualify them for either of the peaceful, learned professions. Common sense teaches them how to act in these cases. But in moral and religious education, this rule of common sense is utterly disregarded, even by many who profess to be conscientious Christian people. Even these are not a “peculiar people,” so far as the training of their children is concerned. They too often suffer their young charge, (which in perfect consistency they ought carefully to educate for eternity,) to grow up in the midst of the same pleasures and pursuits, in which those are wont to indulge, who appear not to dream of an eternity.

Now it is probably true that all parents desire for their children the highest ultimate good, though they may not seek it. That is, they would have them go to heaven when they die. This is true of many who do not profess to be Christians. Like the wicked prophet Balaam, they may say, for themselves and for their beloved offspring, “Let me die the death of the righteous,” while they think not of living the life of the righteous. The end of the journey of life is all that is even thought of.

The way which leads to it is entirely overlooked. The kind of life which will lead to a happy death and a peaceful immortality after the death of the body, does not seem to have been conceived of, by many who will say that they hope for such a consummation. Yet these may easily learn the way in which they should walk, and lead their children. The Bible is full of plain instruction on this point. They who profess to be Christians are supposed to know it already. Solomon tells them that if they would have their children walk in the right way when they grow up, they should train them carefully in that way. And a greater than Solomon has said, for their direction as to what that way is, "Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Now with these two precepts, one from each portion of God's revealed word, each of the two Testaments of his grace, it is not easy for the reflecting to make any mistakes. The rule is to educate the child in the way in which he is to go, not in some other way; to guide his youthful feet into the right path, and keep them therein, that when he is old, he may follow the same, of his own accord, and from the force of habit. The way pointed out, is the way of holiness, such as the Lord Jesus has prescribed, and in which he will sustain the faltering steps of the humble disciple. It is a way of righteousness and peace, having its beginning in a sincere faith in Christ, as the Saviour of the penitent believer, (as the Sanctifier of the faithful, and the eternal Judge and King,) and marked throughout by obedience to his precepts.

In this way, every Christian should surely desire and endeavour to lead the young immortals who are committed to his care. Indeed how strange it would seem to be, for parents to suffer their children to walk in the way which is regarded as fatal to their own eternal peace! Yet this is done by Christians, strange though it appear. And how comes it? Is not the gospel the same for all persons? Is there not one and the same religion for the young and the old, for children as for parents; the same in its remedy, its rewards and its penalties? Must not children, then, be instructed early in the great first truths of the gospel? Must not they be taught, as well as adults, their true condition, and the offered remedy, that they are corrupt by nature, and liable, so soon as they become accountable agents, to be condemned by the just law of God; that God has sent his Son to die

for their sins, and to rise again for their justification, and that he offers pardon and peace through faith in his Son, the forgiveness of transgression, and the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit? Ought not children to learn the precious promises, and the dread penalties made known in the gospel, judiciously, yet plainly taught? While they are yet babes, they must be fed with food convenient for them, with milk indeed. But it should be the sincere milk of the word, of the same word which their parents are bound to heed.

Will any excuse themselves by saying, "Let us wait till their moral accountability is fixed, before we teach them these things?" Forbear to urge this excuse, parents! Satan knows the period of moral accountability better than you do, and he will surely strike the first blow. He is ever on the watch, and if you leave the minds and hearts of your children untrained, free, as you suppose, to choose the right path when they come of age, you will find that they have acquired a strong bias towards evil.

There are two causes of error on this important subject. (1.) A mistaken notion in regard to the period of moral responsibility, in children. (2.) A misconception of duty towards them. And these two causes often combine their influence in the same case. The first is perhaps the most common, if not the most fatal error. Many parents are unwilling to regard their children as accountable beings, in a moral and religious sense, until they have grown up to what is called "the age of discretion." But this is a very uncertain period, and some never reach it. Misjudging parents allow their children to live in the practice of little sins, in the hope that they will outgrow them, not considering that little sins and little children will grow to be great sins and great children, and that the growth in stature and in wickedness will most likely be proportionate. They will not restrain "the little innocents," because the sins "are so harmless, and will be thrown aside in mature life, when their children come to know their duty." So indeed they may be thrown aside, to make room for greater sins, as the sports of childhood give place to amusements more befitting the advanced stage of vigorous youth.

And how are they to know their duty, when they grow older? Do the parents mean to teach them? If so, how blind they are to reason and a sense of their own and their children's good! Do they act thus, in regard to the intellectual education of their

offspring? Would they refrain from teaching the rudiments until the mind has become capable of grasping the deepest truths of science? Do they not pursue a settled system, leading the mind on from the first principles of knowledge to its higher and highest results? And why will they not begin to teach moral and religious truth, and begin to enforce moral and religious duty, at the same time that they lay the foundation of mental education? "They wait for the period at which moral responsibility begins." Oh! how fatal a delusion! What a rash venture! Who indeed will dare to decide for a child when this responsibility attaches itself! It is much earlier with some than with others. There is sometimes a very great precocity in the moral sense as well as the intellect. And while these fond and deluded parents are admiring the early developed mental powers of their children, and courting admiration for them from the world, they do not consider that if these powers were directed to the subject of moral and religious truth, they would exhibit corresponding results. Does not the young prodigy have some notions of moral and religious duty, which not being confirmed or corrected by the parent become inoperative? Are there not some convictions that are smothered in the birth through the negligence of those who should strive to keep them alive; some workings of conscience that lose their power over the mind, in consequence of an entire want of wholesome parental counsel; some sparks of religious feeling in the infant soul, that might be fanned into a flame of sweet incense, but which are suffered to go out, serving only to mark the soul for judgment?

It is surely a perilous thing to suffer young children to shut out from their minds the truths which are designed to be the seed of a spiritual life to come; to let them grow up as if they had no souls, "until they are old enough to choose a course of life for themselves," with the vain hope that they will choose what is right. No matter when the age of accountability may come, come it will, and must, and if there has been no training in the path of duty, the first step may, and probably will, be in the way of eternal condemnation. Some there are who, perhaps, suppose that it is proper to leave the minds of children "unbiassed on religious matters, that they may choose for themselves at mature age." But this is a great mistake. They are bound to bring up their children in the way in which they should go;

according to the word of God, and if, in after life, these go astray, they alone are responsible; the parents are released. It would be idle to pretend, that the mind should be kept neutral, and not prejudiced in favour of religion. It cannot be neutral. If it is not trained in the right way, it will go in the wrong one. There are influences at work constantly which lead to evil. There is no middle path. And even if the heart were not naturally corrupt and inclined to evil, at enmity with God, if the young were only as likely to choose the wrong as the right, they could hardly resist the constantly besetting temptations to sin. But being corrupt naturally, the heart must be guided and held in the way of righteousness. And the plea that it is wrong to prejudice the young in favour of religion is a suggestion of the great enemy of souls. Satan, seeking his prey from the ranks of the young, preferring the tender shoots of frail humanity, says to the deluded parent, "Do not prejudice your child, leave him to himself." That is, in plain terms, "Leave him to me." And when the parent has yielded, the tempter moulds the waxen heart of youth into a shape that will forever bear his image. Oh, leave not the young to the merciless destroyer; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Feed them with "the pure milk of the word," that they may acquire a taste for the "strong meat" in due time. Teach them to feel that they are sinful, prone to err, and that only by prayer to their heavenly Father for the help of his Holy Spirit, can they be kept from the snares of the evil one. Oh, who can tell how soon the infant soul may become the sanctuary of the Lord, in which his Spirit dwells! Cannot the relation between the child and his heavenly Parent be learned at the same time with that which he holds to his earthly parent? I know not why it cannot. Some may say (and be content with themselves,) that they constantly teach their children what is the right way, and tell them to walk in it when they grow up. But this is far from observing the precept in our text. What says it? Not, show the child the way, stand and point to it like a guide board; but, "Train him up in it." It is vain to point out a difficult path which must one day be trod, while you do nothing to enable the young to keep it. They may not be able even to find it, in mature life, by your direction, much less to keep it. But this they must do in order to be saved.

How absurd then is it, Christian parents, to teach your children or to suffer them to learn in youth, what they are expected not to practise when they become old: to let them fasten their young and ardent affections upon what they must deliberately renounce in mature life, when habit has become too strong for sober philosophy and cool conviction.

But if these by their profession of faith are made culpable for such mismanagement of their high trust, how much more so are they who have brought their children to baptism, and therein dedicated them to the Lord in the covenant of his church. You who have done this have solemnly promised, on the part of these little immortals, that they shall "renounce the devil and all his works, and shall walk in the commandments of God all the days of their life:" and on the strength of this promise they have become the children of God, and heirs of everlasting life. How will you make good your promise if you do not early teach them the way of God's commandments, and strive so to fix their feet therein, that they shall not slide? Do Christian parents who have become sponsors for their children, bear in mind their solemn vows, and strive to fulfil them? If they duly appreciate the solemn and responsible office which they have assumed, they will take care, as in the sight of God, that the young souls dedicated to Christ by them, be "nurtured in the admonition of the Lord." The mother, especially, if she has a due sense of the importance of the rite, will receive her child back to her bosom from the baptismal font, "with Jesus' mark impressed, to nurse for Jesus' sake," "a child of God, a member of Christ, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." She has the moulding of the young and tender heart, and on her lies the responsibility for godly training. Oh! how much depends on the mother's faithfulness! She must deeply feel her obligations to Christ, in order rightly to guide, by the most assiduous care, the mind which discerns her thoughts, and the heart which borrows her sympathies. If her devotion to the religious training of her baptized child have been such as a true sense of her obligations would prompt, and if her prayers follow the Christian nursing into the world of sin, where storms assail, it would be a wonder if his footsteps should slide from the path of peace forever.

Occasional waywardness there may be in the children of the most pious and devoted parents. But rare, rare indeed, is the

instance of a final and total departure of the child of many prayers and much parental admonition. Parents may be pious and devoted to their personal religious duties, neglecting to lead their infant charge in the way which they themselves feel bound to walk. Or they may teach by precept, what they do not illustrate and enforce by example. In either case the baptized child may come to ruin. For the young too readily detect inconsistencies in those who are responsible for their training. And can any parent reasonably expect a child to do, even while under parental authority, what is declared to be right, if he himself neglect to do the same? Still less can it be expected after the child has been loosed from restraint and left to the guidance of his own will.

The child that has been dedicated to the Lord, should be nurtured in holiness. He should early be taught his dependence upon God for grace to lead a holy life, and the necessity of prayer for that grace. But will it be enough for the parent to sit and coldly instruct the child in this duty, and to dictate a prayer suitable to the age of the child, or that prayer of our Lord which is suitable to every age, while he neglects to prostrate himself before God? Will not the most ordinary mind detect the inconsistency, and demand why the young should need the help of God, or be bound to pray to God, more than the old? How much more consistent, as well as more likely to be effectual, would be the example of that truly pious and watchful mother, who kneels beside her infant worshipper, and invokes God's blessing, in language which the young supplicant can understand and make its own? And better still perhaps will it be, if the child can be the witness of the parent's private devotions, offered fervently and habitually.

Who can estimate the influence of a mother's prayers, even those that are unheard, save in heaven? How often have the secret fervent supplications of a mother, seemed to have excited godly motions in the heart of her child, even after a long interval of moral apathy and death; the Holy Spirit, who was addressed in the glorious heaven, making his sure though late response from the bosom of an humble penitent. May we not see, there is much to encourage this waiting on the Lord for blessings on our children? Rarely does it fail to call down showers of grace. But if there were fewer evidences of the

efficacy of prayer for the young, whom we undertake to bring up, it would not be the less our duty to offer it, and to show our children how to offer it for themselves. It is the parents' duty, whether sponsors for their children or not, to give them all the benefits which pertain to baptism. They are to teach them what obligations are assumed in that rite, and to urge them to take those obligations upon themselves, with a view to fulfil them. In all that pertains to religion, they are to be the first teachers of their offspring. And though it may be aided, by the Sunday School teachers, the work of constant superintendence is not to be surrendered to these auxiliaries.

May we not appeal to your experience, my Christian friends? Tell me, you who are professed followers of Jesus, can you not revert with tender recollection to the early teachings of a pious mother? And does not your heart delight to pay its tribute of grateful love to that kind and patient teacher? And are there not some who can remember, with many self-upbraidings, such godly counsels, which, alas, they have not applied to their souls' peace? Take heed to them now. Let not a mother's prayer return to her void. Let the Holy Spirit, whose converting power has been often and earnestly invoked for you, bear witness, through the breathings of your spirit in the communion of saints, to her successful pleadings. Strive with a parent's strivings, and you may win Christ, and be at peace with God.

We speak to those who have reached the age of maturity, whether they have become guides to the young or not. Have you been taught the way in which you should go? And if so, have you continued to walk in that way, and may you be found therein? If not, we fear you have not been trained in that way, for rarely is there any failure in the fulfilment of the proverb chosen for our text. Thankfully remember the teaching which you have received, and strive to attain the end of it, a lively faith which leads to eternal life. And to those parents who have received in childhood that religious training which has brought them to a holy life through faith in Christ, we suggest the duty of giving to their children the same benefits which their own experience shows to be so valuable. You should be anxious to bring them up in the way of godliness, which you know to be the way of peace, being confident that they will keep it unto eternal life. The church points out the means of obtaining what

she promises. And well would it be for the world, if the church were followed more closely by those who profess to receive her teaching. She is a fond and faithful mother, that always trains up her children in the way they should go, if they will only submit to her guidance. She brings them to baptism, in which they are regenerate, and grafted into the body of Christ's church, receiving the seal of God's promises of pardon and grace through Christ Jesus. And in the catechism, the children are taught that they are adopted as heirs of Christ's everlasting kingdom, and are instructed in the proper way to secure their inheritance. And when children have been made, by baptism, members of the church of Christ, they should be instructed in the doctrines of Christ, as taught in the church. No other teaching than her own, (however near it may be to the true faith,) can be right instruction for one of her members. And it is very wrong and dangerous, a wilful breach of church vows, to allow the children of the church to receive religious teaching which is not recognised by the church. Parents know not the danger, as well as the guilt of attending upon the ministrations of those teachers, whose influence leads to the heresy and schism, against which, at the bidding of the church, they solemnly pray.

And now, Christian parents, have you done for your children what the religion which you profess demands? Have you brought them to the font and dedicated them to Christ in holy baptism? If not, let not the high privileges of church membership be any longer denied them. Their eternal salvation may depend on your decision in regard to this matter. And if you have caused them to be baptized, have you fulfilled the obligations assumed on their behalf? Have you taught them, or begun to teach them, what a solemn covenant they have made through you, and urged them to prepare to fulfil its terms? Have you diligently sought their moral and religious improvement, first and foremost, above all other things? If not, reflect upon the awful consequences to your children's souls. What will you answer to the great Shepherd, when he demands at your hands the lambs that he has entrusted to your keeping? God grant that all who are made such keepers may be able to give a good account of their stewardship, and behold their redeemed children in the presence of the great Judge, witnesses of their faithfulness, and heirs with them of eternal glory.

SERMON LIV.

ON CONFIRMATION.

“Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.”—HEBREWS vi. 1, 2.

THE apostle here reckons among the principles of the doctrine of Christ, “the laying on of hands,” which is brought into close connexion with the doctrine of baptism. Being one of the principles which lie at the foundation of the Christian system, it must be an institution which all who embrace that system were concerned to know and receive. This laying on of hands was the same which was practised by the apostles, upon all who were baptized into the Christian faith, as a mode of conveying to them the gift of the Holy Spirit, confirming them in faith, and assuring them of God’s grace, as well as imparting, to some men, miraculous power. It may be shown by several proofs, drawn from the history of the Acts of the Apostles, that the laying on of their hands upon baptized believers, was necessary, and was followed by the spiritual benefit, called the gift of the Holy Ghost. We might bring forward the case of the people of Samaria, who were converted by the word preached by Philip the deacon, who had the power of working miracles, but had not the authority to perform this office, of laying on of hands upon those whom he had baptized. Men, holding the highest office of the Christian ministry, were sent from Jerusalem to Samaria, in order to lay hands on them for their spiritual strengthening. This institution, thus having the sanction of the Holy Spirit, and thus being employed

for bestowing his gifts, was continued by the primitive church, and has been handed down to us; the bishops who fill the highest office in the ministry, having in every age of the church, been the administrators of the rite, called "the rite of confirmation." In the form of prayer prescribed for this impressive ceremony, the bishop declares, that he lays his hands on the persons coming to him, "after the example of the holy apostles, to certify them by this sign, of God's favour and gracious goodness towards them." As it is now used in the church, the rite is designed to confirm the believer in the faith which he has professed in baptism, and to afford those who were baptized in infancy, an opportunity of publicly testifying their adherence to the doctrine, worship, and discipline of the church. It also serves as a mode of bringing into communion with the church, those who have declared themselves Christians in other communions. These three classes of persons are subjects for confirmation; and in confirmation they ratify and confirm the vows of baptism. This will be seen on reference to the office set forth in the Book of Common Prayer. The officiating bishop thus addresses each candidate, "Do you here, in the presence of God, and of this congregation, renew the solemn vow and promise that you made, or that was made in your name, at your baptism, ratifying and confirming the same, and acknowledging yourself bound to believe, and to do all those things which you then undertook, or your sponsors then undertook for you?" To this question, he answers, "I do." In order then to ascertain the nature of the obligations assumed in confirmation, we have only to look to the office for baptism. We shall find that they embrace repentance and true faith. The candidate for baptism is required to answer, before God, the following question, "Dost thou renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the sinful desires of the flesh, so that thou wilt not follow, nor be led by them?" To this searching question, whose terms are plain to common minds, so that there can be no entrapping, and need be no self-delusion, he is obliged to answer, as in the sight of the Searcher of all hearts, "I renounce them all."

There is no compounding, no mental reservation, no sparing of favourite forbidden indulgences, no bargaining for worldliness, on condition of abandoning wickedness. But there is a plain, posi-

tive, and entire renunciation of not only "the devil, and all works of his prompting, but likewise, of worldly vanities, the vain pomp and glory of the world," a term which every honest mind can explain to itself, as expressing whatever the world loves and admires, which conflicts with a hearty dedication of ourselves to Christ, which dissipates religious thoughts, and leads to forgetfulness of God. These things, and all eager desires for them, are solemnly renounced. Besides this, the person taking the vow declares that by God's help, he will endeavour not to follow, nor be led by these wicked principles, and these temptations to sin. Here is a distinct promise of continual striving after holiness, of watchful, prayerful striving. Endeavouring by God's help, implies a faithful, diligent, and habitual seeking of that help, in prayer to God. And without this, the baptized person cannot reasonably expect the grace promised in baptism. For this grace, like every other manifestation of divine favour, under the Christian dispensation, is bestowed through means divinely appointed, and depends on conditions divinely prescribed.

Prayer is as much a divinely instituted means of grace, as is "the laying on of hands" in confirmation, or the use of "the outward sign" of water in baptism. Just as in husbandry, culture is needful, as well as the sowing of seed; so in religion, the necessary growth in grace, the desired fruits of the Spirit, demand of the believer, working in the light and heat of God's favour. This constant, prayerful striving, the candidate for baptism promises. The vows just considered include what the catechism embraces in the term "repentance," which is one of the conditions of salvation. With regard to the other condition, "faith," the office for baptism has this question addressed to the candidate, "Dost thou believe all the articles of the Christian faith, as contained in the Apostles' Creed"—that is, the creed repeated in our morning and evening service? The required answer is, "I do," I believe them all. Then follows the demand, "Wilt thou be baptized in this faith?" Wilt thou make a public profession of this belief, and be publicly sealed as a member of Christ's church? Such is the avowed desire of the candidate. He then promises to live in accordance with the profession made, and the principles of the religion professed, "by God's help, obediently to keep his holy will and commandments, and walk in the

same during life." The baptismal vow, including these several promises, is simply renewed in the rite of confirmation, by those who have been baptized at mature age. To these persons we need only suggest the expediency of availing themselves, as soon as possible, of the benefits of a divinely instituted means of grace, which subjects them to no new obligations. They are invited to come before the Lord, who is the Dispenser of the grace which fits the soul for heaven, and repeat their pledges of devotion to his service, and receive a renewed assurance, through his authorized minister, of his favour towards them, and of his tender care of them, as his children by adoption.

A two-fold benefit pertains to the ordinance. It requires an act on the part of the subject of it, which in itself, under any circumstances of serious and solemn earnestness, must be profitable to religious edification, the renunciation of sin, and of the worldly principles and indulgences, which lead to its development in the character and life of every man. And it displays the ministration of a holy office, of divine appointment, to which belongs, by necessary implication, a confirming grace, meet for the wants of the believing, but frail and fallible member of Christ, who needs to be established. And who that has had any religious experience, will doubt for a moment, the great profitableness of a solemn renewal of the baptismal vow, even when there can be no other strengthening of the believer, than that afforded by the review of God's promises made to him through Christ Jesus? We mean such strengthening of religious purposes, and of that confidence in God from which they spring, as every Christian can derive from calling up to his mind, while doing an act of faith, those general assurances of the gospel, which attach themselves closely to the discharge of Christian duty. Grace flows in marked channels, and he who diligently keeps the channel, will not fail to obtain the grace. Hence we urge the expediency of using all the means of grace, in the order in which they are ordained. Formal, prayerful self-dedication to God in Christ Jesus, being always profitable, how much more beneficial is it, when there is annexed to it a special provision of divine grace, as in the rite of confirmation. If then, believer, you come in faith to this holy ordinance, after having been baptized into Christ, you may be sure of a blessing—perceptible it may not, need not be, except in

your growth in the Christian stature, but a real blessing, and the more real for having only this manifestation. You have an assurance of God's mercy, accompanied with a special invocation of the Holy Spirit, to help you to maintain your warfare with sin, and Satan, and support you under all the trials of a life spent in the discharge of Christian duty. Look not then, on confirmation as a duty merely, but also, as a high and precious privilege, which you should eagerly covet and diligently improve, for your spiritual benefit. It is not only a coming to God, on your part, with a renewal of your solemn, deliberate, and earnest consecration of yourselves to his service, but it is likewise a coming of God to you, with renewed pledges of a Father's love, and of grace that will lead you safely through the trials of life, and the struggle with death, to eternal joy in heaven.

We have spoken hitherto with reference to those who take the vows of baptism in their own name, at mature age. There is another and larger class of persons, for whom the rite of confirmation is designed, those who receive baptism in infancy. For these the vows of baptism were made by their parents or god-parents as their sponsors, or sureties, "till they should come of age to take them upon themselves." The sponsors were needed to give expression to the covenant with Christ, made on the part of the infants. Baptism itself, (being a divine ordinance, embracing the children as well as the parents,) fixes the obligation to do what the sponsors promise that the infant will do, even though no promise be made in words. The sponsors really take upon themselves no other duty than this, "to see that the infants be taught what a solemn vow, promise, and profession they have made by their sureties, and to take care that these infants be brought, at a fit season, to the bishop, to be confirmed by him."

When they have done this, when they have taken care that right instruction has been given, and that, after such instruction, the baptized child has been named to the minister of the parish, as one fit to be presented to the bishop, they will have done their duty. And this engagement on their part does not, in any degree, lessen the obligation of parents, who are not sponsors, to teach their baptized children their covenant duties. This obligation can never be transferred to any substitute. Sponsors are to take the place of parents in case of their death, and to quicken

their diligence if they should be neglectful of their duty. But whether parents and sponsors have been faithful or not, if the baptized child, when he comes to full age, knows that he was, in the rite of baptism, brought into a covenant relation with Christ, it is his duty to prepare himself for confirmation, and present himself to his minister for approbation. It is his duty to come forward, and offer himself as a candidate, but it is also his duty to be prepared. And it is the minister's privilege to reject him if not prepared; because the minister of the parish must certify in writing that he deems all, who are presented, fit persons to receive the rite.

In the case of baptized children, "being now come to years of discretion," confirmation is, therefore, a deliberate choice of Christ as a Saviour and a Master, an acknowledgment of the obligations imposed on them in baptism, those obligations which we have just considered, in the case of the adult who took the vows in his own name. Most of you who have not been confirmed belong to this class. You were brought in faith and obedience, by your parents, to the baptismal font, and there washed with the consecrated water, and signed with the sign of the cross, in token of your future determination, "to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under his banner, and to continue his faithful soldier and servant, unto your life's end." You have been diligently taught, we will suppose, by those who brought you to baptism, what a solemn vow and profession were made for you then, and how much is implied in the form of dedication. If you have been rightly instructed, you know the fundamental principles of the Christian religion; and if you have been faithfully nurtured, you can offer no excuse for a want of readiness to embrace them, which can be accepted by your Lord.

You have been taken out of the society in which you were placed by nature, "the world," and grafted into the body of Christ, or the society instituted by him, called "the church," made a member of it by baptism, which is the seal of God's covenant to grant remission of sins, and his Holy Spirit. You were committed to the care of spiritual guardians, with the implied injunction on Christ's part, "Take these children, and nurse them for me."

In obedience to this injunction you have, we will suppose, been

instructed in the way of godliness. Your parents have taught you, with the first dawn of reason, and the first accents of lisping speech, to commend yourselves to the care of the God who called you into his kingdom on earth. And they have prayed with you, guiding your thoughts heavenward, putting in your mouths fit words of supplication and praise, holding in their hands the electric chain, which binds the soul to the throne of grace, and conducting its invoked blessings to your souls. On sending you forth into the midst of worldly snares, they have carefully warned you, contrasting worldly habits, desires, and motives, with those which belong to the religion of Christ; and bidding you beware lest you be betrayed into a surrender of your birthright for a mess of high-seasoned pottage, or in the promiscuous assemblage of conflicting systems, learn to call evil good, and good evil. They have counselled you never to compromise the principles of your calling, but to live "as children of God adopted in Christ Jesus."

Such, we may suppose, has been the faithfulness of your parents, and if it has not been such, let those parents feel rebuked by this picture of a true sponsor, nursing Christ's children. Let them consider what a mockery it is, to bring children into covenant with Christ, and make vows which demand the diligent inculcation of religious principles, careful nurture in the way of godliness; and yet suffer those children to grow up without any sensible bias towards religion, almost in ignorance of its precepts, utterly unconscious of its privileges. Absurd indeed, it is, to bind a child by a vow, "to renounce the vain pomp and glory of the world," a vow which the child is expected to assume at mature age; and yet, bring him up in the midst of sin and worldliness, without any protection from their snares, yea, in daily familiarity with the things which are to be renounced forever, on coming to years of discretion. As if one who, throughout that period of life when the heart is most easily moulded, has been wont to revel in worldly pleasures, and irreligious practices, would, at the beck of a parent, or sponsor, suddenly abandon, and forever renounce them.

We speak to the conscience of every one who has vowed "to bring up children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." But let us suppose that all is done which the church expects of her members, thus taking upon themselves sponsors' vows, and that the baptized child, now grown to the age of moral responsibility,

knows that he was made a member of the church of Christ, and bound "to confess the faith of Christ crucified," what is the plain path of duty before him? Shall he not come before the Lord, and in the face of the church declare that he will be the servant of the Lord, that he ratifies and confirms the vows made in his name, that he will ever maintain the faith in which he was baptized, that he will cherish and diligently improve the precious privileges of his new birth, striving, by the help of God's grace, to become meet for the heavenly inheritance? Yes, such is his bounden duty. Will he not do it? Will he cast away his birth-right? Will he forfeit all the blessings of adoption, trampling under foot the covenant of grace?

Children of the covenant, consider these things! Come, in obedience to the will of God, to the rite of confirmation. But come in faith, with true penitence and a firm purpose to walk in the way of God's commandments. With the heart believe unto righteousness, and with the mouth make confession unto salvation. In the name of the great Captain, on whose roll your names have been placed, resolve manfully to fight under his banner, against sin, the world and the devil, and to continue Christ's faithful soldiers and servants unto your life's end. Be this the temper of your minds, and you will be rightly prepared for confirmation, and for the holy communion of the Lord's body and blood, which is a nourishing feast, sustaining spiritual life, and setting forth an antepast of that blessedness, which belongs to an eternal communion with Christ in his heavenly kingdom.

SERMON LV.

ON THE EUCHARIST.

“For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till he come.”—1 CORINTHIANS, xi. 26.

THERE can be no doubt that these words refer to the ordinance known and used by the church, from the days of the apostles, as the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. The history of its origin and appointment is short and simple. Our Lord, at the close of the last passover which he ate with the twelve, consecrated a portion of the bread and of the wine, by a significant gesture, and a form of words, which set them apart from common use for the sacred purpose then designed. When he had blessed and broken the bread, he said, “Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins.” The ordinance thus instituted by our Lord himself, might have well been regarded as designed only for the use of the twelve apostles, if we had no evidence of its use by believers generally during the apostolic age.

But St. Paul gives more than one caution to the converts, whose religious state he had at heart, in regard to the proper and profitable use of the sacrament of the supper, which shows the common observance of it, by the members of the church of Christ. The words of our text clearly show the participation of the brotherhood of believers in this ordinance. For the epistle from which it was taken was written to the whole church at Corinth—to all the Corinthian members of the church. He reproves them,

in other parts of it, for certain irregularities and abuses, which had marked their observance of the ordinance. And in the text, in which he points out the design, and also declares the perpetual obligation of it, he speaks to them all as a brotherhood: "Ye do show the Lord's death till he come." Hence, in the apostle's day, the rite, which is called the supper of the Lord, was received by all avowed believers, who were in fellowship with the apostles.

Our text, in its simple analysis, exhibits three points for consideration. First, The persons who are proper partakers of the holy sacrament.

Secondly, The object and meaning of it.

Thirdly, The perpetual obligation to observe it.

Before we treat the text, agreeably to this easy analysis, let us offer a few general remarks upon the whole subject. There is now in use by the church, as well as by various societies of Christians, a solemn rite known as the Lord's supper, or the holy communion, or eucharist. As it is variously called, so it is doubtless variously understood. By well-instructed Christians it is surely regarded as a divine ordinance, in which there are certain elements chosen by our Lord, and an administrator as well as recipients. But all Christians are not well-instructed; and it is a pity that there are so many who seem not to desire instruction. But we take it for granted, that you all look for a proper administrator of the sacrament of which you come to partake. We feel quite sure that if any one of your fellow communicants, however pious and godly he might be, should, in the absence of your minister, stand at the altar before you, and offer to give you the communion of the body and blood of Christ, you would refuse the offer, as made by an intruder into the sacred office. Are we right, my brethren? Well, be it so. But on what ground would you thus decline to receive at his hands the same elements of which you would partake with him at the hands of your minister?

We wish you to take this question home with you, and ponder it well. View it in all its bearings, and be fully prepared to answer it before God, and to your own heart and conscience. In the meanwhile, we will answer it, so that we may go on with our discourse intelligibly. And to do this well, let us first ask, what is the avowed and presumed origin of the rite so solemnly observed? Is it divine or human? Was it a device of man, a form suggested

by private Christians for their religious benefit? We speak now of what is used by the church as a sacrament, and not of any attempted imitations of it. Was it instituted by the church, as of her own inherent authority, at any age of her history? No;—every child who can say the Church Catechism, knows better. It was ordained by Christ himself, and hence a divine ordinance. You will readily perceive, therefore, that the authority to administer the ordinance must come from the same source with the ordinance itself. If a private Christian did not establish the ordinance—if the body of believers who partake of it did not, and could not institute it—then neither any single believer, nor the whole body of believers, could hold or give authority to administer it. You will all admit this. Suppose that during the vacancy of the rectorship of this, or any other parish, the communicants should not only designate one of their number to act as a lay reader, but should also request him to administer the holy sacrament of the supper. You would be willing to join with him in the service read by him, we will suppose, and listen to some good sermon selected from some volume of sermons published by clergymen of the church. But would the appointment by a vote of his fellow communicants give him such a character as would induce you to receive as a sacrament, the bread and wine which he should offer you, supposing that he could be so irreverent as to offer them as such? We think none of you would partake thereof. As a reader of the service, you would view him as a layman, doing what a layman could properly do. But as one presuming to administer the holy sacrament of the supper, you would view him as a layman still, and therefore incapable of doing it, not having the requisite authority. And you would rightly judge. You see, then, that the voice of the whole body of communicants could not give to any individual of the body, authority to administer the communion, for the simple reason that they could not give him holy orders, or ministerial authority. Now could all the rest of the congregation, acting with the communicants, add any thing to their power in the matter? We ask your careful attention and your deliberate judgment. Surely you will answer unhesitatingly, No.

Take this thought home, and ponder it well, and let it lead to a just appreciation of the ministerial office. For the same au-

thority which ordained the sacrament, ordained also the ministry, by whose hands alone it can be properly administered. And if, in any attempted imitation of the original ordinance, the authority to administer be wanting, it is as much a defect as a want of conformity in any other respect.

If man can alter what God has positively prescribed, he can do so in one point as well as in another. If a substitution of some other elements, as meat and water for bread and wine, or the rejection of the form of consecration set forth by our Lord, would vitiate the ordinance, would not the intrusion of an unauthorized administrator do as much? If, then, the ordinance, being Christ's, must conform in all things to the pattern prescribed, in the elements used, the words and act of consecration, and the appointed administrator, you will, if you revere the authority of Christ, always examine what is offered to you as a sacrament, and see if it lacks any of the requisite marks of a true sacrament. For however seriously and solemnly it is offered, and however ignorantly a counterfeit ordinance may be set forth, the defect, if any, will be equally fatal. No pious intention can make a sacrament of that which is not one. And if misguided zeal prompt Christians to use a form which has an outward resemblance to one, they may find comfort in what they do, as an act of religious devotion, but they cannot give a sacramental character to any exercise of human authority.

The instructed child learns in the Catechism of the church, the meaning of the word *sacrament*. "I mean an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us; ordained by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and pledge to assure us thereof." This is the meaning of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, as well as that of baptism. Who else, but Christ our Lord, could ordain a rite as a means and a pledge of grace, which he only can bestow? Finding, then, a divinely authorized administrator of the ordinance thus defined, let us see, as we proposed to inquire,—

First, Who are the proper partakers of it?

We have already observed that the text is addressed to the members of the church: of course those old enough to make a profession of faith in Christ—those who were baptized and confirmed in the church. And by the rule of our own branch of the church,

as laid down in the rubric, it is declared that none "shall be admitted to the holy communion, until such time as he be confirmed, or be ready and desirous to be confirmed." This is said at the close of the office for confirmation, and refers, evidently, to baptized persons old enough to feel the obligation and the desire to be confirmed. All baptized members of the church who have been confirmed, or who, being ready and desirous to be, are waiting an opportunity, and resolved to embrace it when offered; these are all proper partakers of the holy sacrament of the supper. Are there not many such here, who have never yet availed themselves of the privilege—never yet discharged their religious duty? Are there not some who have been confirmed long since, who turn away from the holy sacrament? And, are there not many who are not yet ready to be confirmed, but who should be? We mean by "ready," not merely willing to come to confirmation, as a formal mode of taking the vows of baptism, and thereby releasing sponsors from their obligation to see that the baptized children are "brought to the bishop to be confirmed." There are some, we believe, who think that this is all the readiness that is demanded. But "ready and desirous," is an expression which covers more than this. It surely includes a disposition to discharge all the duties involved in the baptismal vow, which is repeated in confirmation, and which distinctly and solemnly renounces sin, and the pomp and vanity of this wicked world. The person coming to confirmation, should be moved by an humble sense of sinfulness, and by true repentance, and an earnest desire to show these religious feelings, by the reverent use of the sacrament of the supper, and by the exercise of that godliness which the sacrament is designed to promote. The movement should be prompted by a desire to comply with the whole design of the church; not merely with the single rule already referred to, in which sponsors are concerned, but likewise with that which prescribes the preparation of heart which should go before the act of self-dedication. This preparation of heart cannot be less, surely, than that which is required of adults coming to baptism, which is declared, in the Catechism, to be repentance and faith—"repentance, whereby they forsake sin, and faith, whereby they steadfastly believe the promises of God, made to them in that sacrament."

We have said that the person coming to confirmation, should

have a desire to show the required religious feelings in the partaking of the Lord's supper. And the church plainly declares her view of the required preparation for confirmation, by the rubric, which says, that "None are to be admitted to the holy communion, until they are confirmed, or are ready and desirous to be confirmed." By this rubric we are surely allowed to hold, that they who have been confirmed are taken to be fit communicants, and that all who come to be confirmed, ought to be ready to receive the holy communion. Indeed, the only other requisite for the holy communion, besides repentance and faith, which the church declares, is charity. And although this is so marked a requisite, that the want of it may exclude a member of the church from the communion, yet the wilful breach of it can hardly be reconciled with true repentance, an indispensable requisite to baptism and confirmation.

The well prepared candidate for confirmation, therefore, can have but little to learn, or little to do, in order to be ready for the holy communion. The answer in our Catechism to the question, "What is required of those who come to the Lord's supper?" is this: "To examine themselves, whether they repent them truly of their former sins, steadfastly purposing to lead a new life; have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of his death, and be in charity with all men." Here, while the need of repentance and faith is declared, the great truth which is the ground of faith, the quickener of repentance, and the prompter to charity, is brought home to the heart of the sinner, called by the grace of God to be a member of Christ, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. The death of Christ is urged upon the thankful remembrance of the partaker of the holy sacrament. And this is what the text brings to our notice as one of the points of view in which we proposed to consider it;—viz.,

II. The object and meaning of the ordinance. "Ye do show the Lord's death till he come."

The object and meaning of the sacrament of the supper, are to exhibit, by way of memorial, the sufferings and death of Christ, not only as a testimony to the fact, as the ground of our salvation, but also as an exercise of faith for the comfort of the partaker. This ordinance of Christ is a witness to his religion—one of the marks by which its authenticity may be forever established. And they who partake of it, help to perpetuate a clear proof of the di-

vine origin, and therefore imperishable character of the system of religion, on which their hope for eternity is based. And this may be urged as a strong plea for its observance, upon those who ask for some proof of profitableness, besides their own spiritual comfort or enjoyment. But the ordinance sets forth not only the fact, but also the doctrine of our redemption. It is an exhibition to the mind and heart of the believer, of the sacrifice of Christ, for the remission of sins—a periodical renewal of the covenant of mercy, made by God in Christ Jesus, for whose sake, as a voluntary expiation, he will forgive the sins of every penitent believer in Christ. To each individual partaker of the consecrated elements, there is this divine assurance and pledge. Inasmuch as you really believe that Christ offered his body and blood as a sacrifice of propitiation, and truly receive these elements as signs of that precious sacrifice, in obedience to his command, (“Do this in remembrance of me,”) the bread and wine blessed by his appointed minister, in his name, are not only sure tokens of your pardon, but also effectual means whereby you may be strengthened in faith, comforted in hope, quickened in repentance, and zeal for godliness, and cheered with the prospect of final blessedness. This is intimated very clearly by the Catechism, which thus describes the benefits of the ordinance:—“The strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the body and blood of Christ, as our bodies are, by the bread and wine.”

The design of our Lord, in the institution of this sacrament, is not satisfied by the common partaking of bread and wine, in memory of his coming among men, of his teaching, or his example, but by such partaking, in especial remembrance of his body broken, and his blood shed, for our redemption. Without a clear perception of this truth, and a thankful remembrance of the love of Christ, shown in the offering of himself as a sacrifice for sin, there is no partaking of the benefits of this ordinance. Celebrated with any other meaning, it is no sacrament.

There is, of course, with the thought of the sacrifice of Christ, the blended recollections of his loveliness of character, as exhibited throughout his ministry, of all that love which made him a Comforter of the sorrowing, as well as the Redeemer of the sinning and the Guide of the wandering. And it must not be forgotten that the same ordinance which sets forth Christ’s dying love for

us miserable sinners, challenges and encourages our love for him, and our charity for our fellow man, and especially our fellow Christians, for his sake. It is in direct acknowledgment of this duty, that the church requires the partaker of the holy sacrament to be in love and charity with his neighbour, and debars from the privilege of communion, those who are at strife and enmity. These are repelled, as well as the openly wicked.

We may now clearly understand the full meaning of the ordinance, which the church observes in obedience to Christ, and which was designed to be perpetual—that is, to be observed as long as the church shall be militant on earth. This is the point to be considered, as thus declared in our text.

III. Ye do show the Lord's death till he come:

Until the second coming of Christ to judge the world, (when the church, being translated from earth to heaven, will have no need of signs, enjoying the fulness of the glory signified,) the sacrament of Christ's body and blood will be a binding ordinance. We believe that it will ever be, as it has hitherto been, a witness to the holy religion which we profess, as one of the marks of the church, of its divine origin, and its identity—an exhibition of the sublime fact, and sustaining doctrine of our eternal redemption by the sacrifice of Christ, a sign of the love which Christians should have for each other, and an incentive to its constant exercise.

Will you, my hearers, help to perpetuate this evidence of our well grounded hope in Christ—this memorial of the purchase of our redemption—this token of God's tender mercy—this pledge of present favour and of everlasting love? Hold not back from any feeling of unworthiness. None are worthy of the grace which the ordinance signifies and certifies. The humblest receiver is the best. You are urged to receive a divine pledge of pardoning mercy. You surely hope for the mercy; it will be given to unworthiness at last, if given at all. If you are not fit to receive the pledge, you are not fit to die, and receive the mercy itself. Die you must, and receive the mercy you must, for Christ's sake alone, or die forever. Dying, you may feel your need of Christ, but you will need him no more than you now do. Take him now, that you may have him at death. Join hands with him in a covenant of faith, repentance, and love, on your part, of pardon and strengthening grace on his, ratifying that covenant, and enjoying its privileges in his own holy ordinance.

SERMON LVI.

ON THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”
—JOHN i. 1, 14.

To those who have never considered the peculiar circumstances under which St. John wrote his account of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the special object which he had in view, it may seem strange that he was so much more particular than the other evangelists, in his testimony to the divinity of his beloved Master. The simple reason may be found in the fact that this had not before been denied or doubted. The other writers of the history of our Saviour's mission, do not make any formal statement of the truth, which had been revealed in the Old Testament, that the Messiah was truly divine—they do not proclaim it as a truth newly discovered, and which it was necessary to bring before the minds of their readers with great solemnity. Their manner is, to speak of it incidentally, as a doctrine well known to their countrymen, and which they were chiefly concerned to apply to the person of Jesus. The main question, and indeed the only question with the Jews, at the time of our Lord's ministry, was not, whether the Christ or Messiah was the Son of God, essentially divine, but whether Jesus was that Messiah.

But in the course of half a century after the death of our Lord, there arose certain sects which denied and opposed this doctrine. Now St. John wrote his Gospel, as some suppose, more than sixty years after the death of our Lord, and had these heresies in view when he wrote: he, therefore, at the very beginning of his account

of the life and doctrines of Jesus, gives his most positive and express testimony to the truth of those doctrines which these heretics denied. They believed that our Lord and Saviour was a mere man, and they had wrong notions in regard to the creation of the world. These notions are opposed by St. John, in the same chapter from which our text is taken, which sets forth the true divinity of the Word or Son of God. Indeed it is not possible to state any truth more clearly. For if language has any definite meaning, the Word, whoever may be represented by this expression, was assuredly God.

The *Logos*, or Word, is one of the names by which the Redeemer of Israel was known by the Jews, and by which the Jewish writers designate Him. The Messiah, or the Christ, is another designation of the same Being. Before the coming of the Saviour, then, he was regarded as the Word, and John wrote so as to be well understood by the Jews, when he said that the Word was God. He meant that the Messiah or Christ was God. In the latter verse of our text, he declares that this Saviour, thus designated, had come into the world, in the form of man, thereby clearly asserting the humanity of that Saviour, as he had just declared his divinity. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. The Word was God, and the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory." God therefore became flesh, and dwelt among us. Here is the doctrine of the incarnation.

Now in whose person was this incarnation shown? The evangelist goes on directly to declare that Jesus was the person, referring to the testimony of John the Baptist, saying, "John bare witness of Him." And what was this witness? John the Baptist said of this Word which became flesh, "This is He of whom I spake. He that cometh after me is preferred before me; for he was before me." And fixing the individual, he said, on seeing Jesus coming unto him, "Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world: this is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me, for he was before me." Jesus, of Nazareth, then, who was born of the virgin Mary, was the Word, which was God.

The testimony of the evangelist himself, we have thus plainly given in a subsequent verse, where he thus fixes the person intended in the first verse. He says of this Word, who was God, "And

the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us;" thus applying the expression to some one who had visited the earth in the human form, and had been known by him. He then declares who this person was, by relating the testimony which John the Baptist bore to Jesus, saying, "John bare witness of him," and connecting his doctrine of the divinity of the Word directly with the history of Jesus, in such manner as to leave no doubt that Jesus was the Word. It is therefore a matter of wonder how any one who admits the inspiration of the writer of this Gospel, or believes that he wrote what he knew to be true, can, without a deliberate perversion of the meaning of plain language, deny the proper divinity of Jesus Christ. And we think that no one would be justified in rejecting the doctrine maintained by the church in all ages, if there were no other scriptural proof of it. But there is much testimony confirming this, both in the writings of St. John, and in those of the other sacred penmen. In the text, however, the proof is very positive. And not only the divinity, but the distinct personality of the Word, the second person in the glorious Trinity, is here expressly asserted. "The Word was with God," is one distinct assertion, and the "Word was God," is another; and we are not to regard this as mere tautology, but as intimating the distinct personality, as well as declaring the real Godhead of Christ. And, looking closely at the context, we shall perceive that the evangelist, with equal distinctness and precision, controverts the several errors of sects which then existed, the Gnostic philosophy of creation, as well as the heretical opinions in regard to Christ's nature. The Gnostics were those Gentile converts who adopted an Egyptian philosophy, full of error and absurdity, and were called Gnostics from the Greek word, which means knowledge, because, (like all who now oppose the established truths of Scripture,) they pretended to superior knowledge and wisdom. It is this philosophy, and not true science, which is condemned in many passages of Scripture. And as the Gnostics, or knowing ones, chiefly propagated their false notions in Asia, St. John was strongly urged to combat them. They taught, among other things, that the Supreme God, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, were distinct beings, that this God first generated an only begotten Son, from whom the Word proceeded by generation, and was inferior to the first born. They held, also, the belief that Christ was an Æon or spirit still lower

than the Word, that there were two *Æons* or high spirits distinct from Christ, one called Life and the other called Light—and that an evil spirit, who was the God of the Israelites, created this visible world out of eternal matter.

Now all these absurd notions, which had been adopted by men professing to be Christians, St. John directly attacks and overthrows, showing that the only begotten Son of God was at once the Word and the Light, and the Creator of the world, the Being by whom all things were made, and that this Son was Jesus the Christ.

Now keeping in view this special design of the writer, we may readily account for the peculiar manner in which he commences his gospel. He says nothing of the genealogy or of the birth of Jesus, which are the subjects which first occupy the attention of the other evangelists, but he opens his account of the works and teachings of Jesus, with the assertion of the great doctrine of the divinity of the Saviour, who, as these preceding evangelists had declared, was incarnate in the man Jesus, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and was born of the virgin Mary. Indeed his gospel is emphatically a doctrinal one. It is a narrative of facts in the history of his Lord. But the facts are chiefly those which display some act of power, which would confirm the claim to divinity, which he had asserted in behalf of Jesus, or illustrate some doctrine which Jesus had taught his disciples. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke were published, before he wrote, and he did not deem it necessary to repeat what they had so fully related. He does not even relate those facts of which he alone of the evangelists was an eye-witness. His chief object seems to have been, to collect into a connected work, such discourses and miracles as confirm the doctrines believed by the church, to confute the heresies that had sprung up around him. Hence he strikes directly at the heresy that Christ was a mere man, in the first verse of his sacred history, by declaring the proper divinity of the Word, which was never created, but was in the beginning with God, co-eternal with him, and co-essential with God.

Having given this testimony to the truth revealed from heaven, in relation to the pre-existence of Christ, he goes on to oppose and overthrow the opinion, that the earth was created by that evil spirit who was supposed to have been the God of the Jews. “All

things were made by him, (that is "the Word") and without him was not any thing made that was made."

The next error of philosophy which he exposed, was that "Light and Life were two beings of a high order, distinct from Christ." Against this he asserts, that in "Him was life, and the life was the light of men." He then discourses upon this light, showing how he was announced by John the Baptist, a man sent from God, to bear witness of the light, taking care to deny that John was himself the light, because it was one of the tenets of the Gnostics, that the light, which was a being superior to Christ, entered into John, just as Christ was supposed to have entered into Jesus, and that hence, John was in that respect superior to Jesus.

The doctrines which St. John lays down so plainly against Cerinthus and the other heresiarchs of his day, are contained in the first eighteen verses of the first chapter of his gospel. The proofs of these doctrines are given in the remainder of the gospel, in the order of history which he has adopted. He relates various discourses of our Saviour, which contain assertions, more or less distinct, of the same doctrines which he had laid down in the introduction. We see, in the progressive history of Jesus of Nazareth, proofs of almighty power and wisdom, in the works which no man could do, unless God were with him. And we cannot rise from the study of this record, made by the beloved disciple of Jesus, unless our minds have been warped by early and deep-rooted prejudice, without being compelled to admit the truth of our text, and to believe that Jesus Christ was the Word that was "in the beginning," or eternally God.

In stating thus particularly the object which St. John undoubtedly had in view, when he wrote the introduction to his account of our Lord's ministry, we designed chiefly to impress upon the mind of the reader the truths which he will find there. And when we say that the Gospel of St. John is, compared with the other Gospels, rather a doctrinal treatise, we mean to intimate that, having heresies to combat, he published more of the doctrinal discourses of our Lord. And this being the case, we should rather look to him for the doctrines of our religion than to the other evangelists. They give us, it is true, enough of the truth which saves, to justify our reception of Jesus as our only Saviour. But we find more and plainer revelations in the writings of his favour-

ite disciple. Let us lay to heart all these truths that show forth the glory of God in the redemption of men, giving God such glory as we may, by humbly and joyfully accepting the salvation which he offers us.

The doctrine of Christ's divinity in the record of St. John's testimony, does not stand alone, but is connected closely with the truth afterwards declared by the evangelist, that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among men, that he who was the life and the light of the world, came unto his own, and they received him not;" that in the likeness of sinful flesh, though without sin, he suffered for sin, by the hands of his deluded people, according to the determinate counsel of God. Thus he was "full of grace and truth," to false and graceless men, proclaiming the way of reconciliation to God, and imparting grace, to enable the penitent sinner to walk in the way of peace, in the light of God's countenance, and in his favour forever. A serious and candid mind must be impressed with the wonderful condescension of that Saviour, who occupying the station, and invested with the dignity, which the language of the text suggests, stooped to the humble condition of manhood, a condition of infirmity and sorrow, for the benefit of creatures that were unworthy of his love. And this contemplation of the divine character, is calculated to excite clearer ideas of the infinite power, as well as goodness of God, than are suggested by the contemplation of him as the self-existent Creator of the universe. Either conception is one of a mysterious subject, and we think equally mysterious. It is as hard for us to conceive of a Being that is without beginning, and without end, as of one who, by an act of his will, could join himself to the nature of one of his own creatures, in the manner represented by the doctrine of redemption. Yet when the fact is presented to our minds, as it is declared and proved, (we may truly add,) in the New Testament, we grasp it with a more vivid conception of the infinite power of the Godhead, than we do the truth declared by Moses, that "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," which involves the necessary truth that himself was without beginning.

But what shall we say of the wisdom and goodness of this great God, who could devise and execute a work of such surpassing greatness and benevolence, as that in which we are chiefly inte-

rested? How shall we estimate or acknowledge this attribute of the Almighty, by which he prefers to be known, than of boundless love? And if, when we look abroad over the face of creation, and survey the numberless proofs of the plastic power of his will, we are filled with wonder and admiration,—if, when we dwell upon these his works, we fall down at the footstool of God in humble, grateful adoration, what should be our feelings and our conduct, when we look around upon the moral creation, and behold the wreck of that order and beauty which sprang from him whose image man once bore, and then consider the decree which went forth, through the incarnation of the infinitely holy God, commanding light to dispel the moral darkness, and truth to repair the moral ruin, which mark the condition of our fallen race? Shall we tremble and adore in the one case, and shall we not melt, and be reformed in the mould of divine love, in the other?

It is in his incarnation, that this Word is the most interesting subject of contemplation. Being therefore satisfied of the truth of the text, we should dwell upon the history of the Word, after he became our brother in the flesh, and consider the purpose of that adoption of our nature, the fulness of love which prompted it, the mode and circumstances of its accomplishment, and the obligations which it forces upon us. Let us think no more of the mysteriousness of that union of the divine with the human nature; let us leave for awhile the consideration of the infinite power and glory of the Agent who could accomplish it, and fill our minds with the thought of that love which was displayed in Christ's humiliation for man's redemption,—for this was the purpose of his incarnation, which we design first to consider. And that this was the purpose of Christ's incarnation, no one who pretends to believe the Scriptures will have the hardihood to deny. For they are full of testimony to this truth. If we had no assurance from our Lord himself, of this precious doctrine, (which we have very clearly expressed) we can hardly open the epistles of his apostles, without finding such declarations as this:—"This is a true saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." And this is fully warranted by the language of Christ, which is so often quoted by the believer, as the ground of that hope upon which his soul reposes:—"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoso-

ever believeth in him might not perish, but should have everlasting life." Salvation, all must admit, was the gift which God bestowed upon man, when he gave his Son Jesus Christ, through whom all who will believe, may be saved by faith. In what this salvation consists, it is not difficult for those who believe the doctrine of our text, to determine. They who reject this doctrine, however, differ from us entirely in the meaning which they attach to salvation through Christ. One thing is certain, in regard to it, viz., that, according to the words of our Saviour just quoted, the effect of belief in him will be this: "that the believer shall not perish, but have everlasting life." By which, as all who receive the New Testament as a divine revelation, do surely agree, must be meant a never-ending state of happiness after death, and not an exemption from natural death, for all men are mortal, let them believe what they may. How then are men to be made fit recipients of such happiness, in a world where a likeness to the Supreme Being would seem to be absolutely necessary? They must be made holy, surely, "for God is holy;" and they must be, likewise, in a state of favour with God through forgiveness of their sins. They must first be pardoned, and then be enabled to live without offence to God in future, before they can enjoy everlasting life in heaven. And this is what we understand by salvation. This is the two-fold mercy which God hath granted us in the gift of his beloved Son. By faith in him we may receive an assurance of pardon for all our sins, though they be many and grievous, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, to help our endeavours to lead a godly life.

Now, without any reference to the plan of redemption, to the merits of Christ, by virtue of which our redemption is obtained, we may well say, with the psalmist, "Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him?" How great is God's goodness, that he should vouchsafe to grant such a redemption by any means whatever! We were corrupt and abominable in his sight, guilty of the most wicked and wanton rebellion against his authority, and had no claim to mercy. We deserved punishment, but we have received favour, and that purchased for us at a great cost, at an immense sacrifice. The mode of redemption displays the love, and the wisdom of God, in such a light, as it passes the power of language fully to set forth. The sacred writers seem to labour

with great effort, to express themselves with proper force, when attempting to show the love of God in Christ Jesus. They speak of "the love which passeth knowledge," of "the unspeakable gift of grace, and the unsearchable riches of Christ." Language is exhausted before they have expressed their ideas of the wonderful mystery of saving grace. And we are not surprised at this. For when we contemplate the unworthiness of the creatures, in whose behalf God interposed his mercy, in connexion with the mode of interposition which it pleased him to adopt, we are utterly amazed. That He who was eternally God, should take upon him the form of a servant, and in the likeness of man, subject to all the infirmities of flesh, except sin, should proclaim the way of eternal life, amidst persecution of the most bitter kind, and suffer death upon the cross, (a death of dreadful torture, as well as of shame,) that he might become that way of life, that the eternal Word, Jesus Christ, should thus become the Author of our salvation, is a mystery which angels may well desire to look into, but which it passes their powers fully to estimate.

But what can give men a just conception of their sinfulness, and consequently of the mercy of God which pardons it, if this representation of his love, and the forgiveness which flowed from it, fail to do so? Nothing that we can conceive of. Hence we perceive in this plan of redemption, God's wisdom, as well as goodness and mercy. For nothing can be so well adapted, as this revelation of redemption, to induce that love of God, which will secure an endeavour to do his will, which is the object chiefly aimed at by its divine Author. Our idea of forgiveness, of its degree and value, must depend upon our idea of the sin which has been forgiven, of its guilt and its certain penalty. Now what can suggest a clearer and more startling conception of God's hatred of sin, than the revelation of the mode of expiation which he has been pleased to ordain? How great must be God's abhorrence of transgression, since pardon can be obtained only through the sacrifice of Christ! And how great must be the love of God, which could pardon sin which he so much abhorred! Such a revelation of the hatefulness of sin, and of the loving-kindness and tender mercy of God, is calculated to work upon the heart of man, and to counteract the strong tendency to evil which exists therein. The offensiveness of sin, and the love of God,

whom he ought not to offend, have the same measure. And he knows how much mercy he has received, and consequently how much gratitude he owes, when he knows how greatly he had sinned. In this we see the wisdom of God, as well as his love. He has presented to man such a picture of his moral guilt, and pollution, as should make him shudder at the thought of continuing in it, through fear of the consequences; and such an illustration of his own gracious and paternal character, as should make him ashamed to continue in that state, because it is so offensive to God.

What then are the conditions of salvation, according to this plan of redemption which we have contemplated? Is it enough that we repent of the sin which offends God? No, forgiveness is not promised on repentance alone. There must be some acknowledgment of this love of God, so surpassingly great. It must not be displayed in vain. The sinner, however penitent, cannot have an assurance of salvation, until he believes that he can have no claim to mercy, but through the prevailing merits of the Son of God, who was the propitiation for our sins, through his blood shed upon the cross. He must not only confess his sins, and implore God to forgive them; he must do so in humble trust in the mediation of the Word, who became flesh for man's redemption, and with sincere desire and earnest effort to walk in the way of godliness, guided and sustained by the Holy Spirit. Such guidance and support are promised to the believer. God will continually aid and strengthen those, who, feeling and acknowledging their weakness, apply to him for help. Hence the doctrine which puts away all self-dependence, ensures a steady going in the way of holiness, and peace, inasmuch as it bids the frail one look for strength to a source that cannot fail.

We may therefore direct every one to this salvation through the incarnate Word. We may bid every soul contemplate him as the only Saviour. If you have been living without faith, and consequently without hope, consider how grievous an offence against God is every sin, and how willing he is to pardon what he so greatly abhors, if you will receive his pardon on his own terms. In the offer of salvation you have every assurance that you can require. You have a divine promise of redemption, founded on a divine sacrifice, showing divine justice fully satisfied by divine

mercy. The same doctrine which teaches you that all sin, however small, is hateful to God, also teaches that he has provided a Saviour, who can deliver from all sin, however great. You are assured, therefore, that while you need a Saviour to shield you from condemnation for the least offence against God, you may find one who is able to shield you from the penalty which is annexed to the greatest. We bid the sinner, who is yet unforgiven, look to this Saviour, as one mighty to save, and at the same time terrible to judge.

And they who have cast away all self-dependence, and have by a deliberate profession of faith made Christ their portion forever, are reminded of the practical bearing which this doctrine has upon their case. You, fellow Christians, may well remember, that your pardon is promised on condition of a lively faith, and that you owe a continual obedience to your divine Saviour. Consider, that, although sanctified to a certain extent by the Holy Spirit, imparted through faith, you are yet liable to sin; and, therefore, are bound to use all diligence to keep your heart right in the sight of God: If, then, you are tempted to commit sin, direct your thoughts to that divine Redeemer, whose blood was the price of your redemption, and reflect how precious a friend you are about to grieve, how great a Master you are about to offend. Consider not only how hateful *all* sin is in his sight, but how peculiarly so that sin is which is committed by those who should always love and obey him—his spiritual family, the fruit of the travail of his soul. Remember who he is that “gave himself for us, to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works,” and take heed that ye live according to the rule of your high and holy calling.

God grant that every knee may soon bow to the name of Jesus, and that while every tongue confesses him to be Lord, every heart may be subject to his will, and give a practical exhibition of the influence of that faith, which gives the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and tends to fill the earth with righteousness and peace.

SERMON LVII.

ON THE TRINITY.

“Go, ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”—MATTHEW xxviii. 19.

THIS was the broad and standing commission which our Lord gave to his chosen ministers. With a view to the promulgation and perpetuation of his religion, he appointed a ministry, with power to transmit its authoritative commission, to preach his word, and to administer certain ordinances designed as marks of his church, and a means of grace for their spiritual comfort and edification. The first duty of this ministry was, to form a society of persons professing to believe in Christ—a visible church under a distinct and well defined organization, which should be a witness to him for all time; which should be the keeper of the word of truth revealed by him; making known to the world through successive ages, what he came to declare, what he had done for man, and how man must live, so as to please God. The church, through its ministry and creed, was designed to set men right before God, in regard to faith, and worship, and living, or practical obedience. Hence it must bear onward, to the end of time, the evidences that God has spoken to man by a special revelation, and the record of what he has spoken; that there may be a trial of faith. It must hold fast, in every age, that knowledge of God which is requisite for proper worship, and keep alive the recollection of the just demands which God makes on our devotion to his service, through his appeals to our reason and conscience, and grateful affection. Agreeably to this view, we notice that our Lord Jesus Christ, having, before he gave himself to death as a ran-

som for sinners, plainly declared that he came on earth for that purpose chiefly, evidently set forth a covenant, through which the blessings of his grace might be obtained. He sent out into the world those whom he had seen fit to call to the work of establishing his kingdom, "to make disciples" from among all nations; that is, to plant the church everywhere, teaching to people of every name, the truths which concern their souls' eternal welfare, and bringing them within the covenant of peace, through the ordinance of baptism. And this is the precise meaning of the text, which sets forth Christ's commission to the apostles. The word rendered "*teach*," means to make one a disciple; that is, convert him to the religion of the person giving the authority; and "baptizing in the name" of that person, implies a full and formal admission to all the privileges of the covenant, and a full and formal adoption of all the bonds of that covenant.

Our text, then, contains the germ of the whole system of Christ's religion. It implies the teaching of what man is now, and what he must be in the sight of God, in order to be saved; what God has done for him, through his redeeming grace, and how man must worship and serve him, so as fully to acknowledge all his attributes and claims to devotion. Right worship is surely a necessary part of religion; and holiness of character will depend very much on our views of God's nature and attributes. If, then, the revelation of the Godhead be such as to excite our wonder, at the same time that it challenges our supreme love—if truth be told us by inspired lips, which fills us with awe at the unfathomable mystery of God's being, and warm affection at the contemplation of his character, as displayed in his dealings with us, the highest purposes of religion are fully answered. All that we need know is, that the revelation be true, which declares the facts which are to be the foundation of religion. No matter how wonderful they are—the more so the better for the purposes of religion—if they rest on divine authority, and are taught in such manner as to speak to the best feelings of our nature. Such are the facts made known to us in the Bible, with regard to the being of God, and his dealings with us. We are assured that, although he is one God, he exists in three persons or manifestations, as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: and that these persons are equal in dignity and power, and one in glory. This

truth is revealed in such manner, as to excite a feeling of awful reverence, while it moves the heart to grateful love, for it is revealed in connexion with the soul's salvation, by a suffering Redeemer. And as in the whole setting forth of divine grace, each person in the Godhead is spoken of as having the attributes of supreme divinity, so the doctrine of the Trinity is declared in the very ordinance by which a man becomes outwardly a Christian.

As in the redemption which Christ proclaims, he, the Redeemer, and the Holy Ghost, the Sanctifier, are both represented as divine, the office of each requiring a divine agency, so in the covenant title to that redemption, the same truth is recited, and stamped on its very seal. The Christian convert is baptized into the name of the Holy Trinity; that is, "into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." And so far is it from being true, as some allege, that the Socinian views of theology, are the most obvious to those who interpret the Scriptures for themselves, without reference to the authority of the church, that the very commission given to the apostles, and the form of initiation into the church of Christ, so strongly intimates the Trinitarian doctrine, that it should set men upon a different search for confirmation of it, and should be sufficient to turn the scale in favour of it, if the evidence in the case were nicely balanced. And if there were no other proof of the doctrine of the Trinity in the New Testament, the formula of baptism, prescribed by our Lord, would be enough to sustain it. But when we find many texts of Scripture which declare the divinity of Christ, and many others which set forth that of the Holy Ghost, we are assured, that when the Christian is required to be baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, he is made a member of the church of Christ, which has within it salvation through the agency of these three manifestations of the Godhead. How irreverent it seems to join together with God the Father, so closely as they are joined in this formula, two of his creatures, however exalted! Place it before you in its naked simplicity, and see how ill the expression comports with the language of reverent homage! "Go, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, God Almighty, and of the Son, a mere man, and of the Holy

Ghost, a quality of mind, or an influence of God's power exerted upon the mind." The devout Christian must shrink from such a lowering of his Godhead. Look now at the other and true view of the matter. Hear, then, the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, before his crucifixion, had claimed to be the "Son of God," in a peculiar sense, "the only begotten of the Father," who claimed to be "one with the Father," and was condemned for blasphemy on that account; who "had been in heaven," before His birth of the Virgin Mary, and "had glory with the Father, before the world was," and who enforced his claims to divinity, by works of divine power.

Hear Him, who had often testified thus, giving charge to his apostles, who were sent into all the world to preach the gospel to every creature; to baptize their converts, "into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," and then say if Christ did not mean to intimate, in the very door-way of his church, the doctrine of a Triune God, which that church was ever to inculcate, and in which the early Christians, as we learn from the epistles addressed to them, were certainly instructed. Let us look at the text more closely. The apostles are therein commanded to bring all nations under the Christian covenant, by the rite of baptism, and to baptize their converts in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: the original says more forcibly into the name—not the names, but name, as of one being. The use of the singular noun is here very significant.

Now in whatever sense the converts were to be baptized into the name "of the Father," in that same sense they were to be baptized into the name "of the Son," and also into the name "of the Holy Ghost." If the Father, therefore, is God, and entitled to worship and reverence, so likewise and equally is the Son; and so also is the Holy Ghost. The language clearly intimates that all three are equal in dignity and authority, and one in glory. And giving to this expression its full value and just meaning, we are prepared to expect that they who, at their first entrance into the church, received, as the engraving on the seal of their admission, such an intimation of the doctrine of the Trinity, would from time to time be taught, through the setting forth of the power and dignity of the Son, and of the Holy

Ghost, in their respective offices in the scheme of redemption, the true divinity of each, and of course their equality in the Godhead with the Father.

And our expectation is fulfilled. Such teaching abounds in the New Testament. The divinity of the Son is shown by the titles, attributes, and actions ascribed to him. The attributes and actions being such as belong only to God, would show his divinity, if he were not called by any divine title. But we have the titles also. In the Old Testament, the Messiah or Christ, is spoken of by the prophecy, as "Jehovah," a name applied only to God. Isaiah calls him "the mighty God, and the Lord God." His birth of a virgin is foretold under the name of "Emmanuel or God with us." And in the New Testament, after his coming, he is called "God," in many places. St. John says that he is "The Word that was in the beginning with God, and that the Word was God; that the Word was made flesh; and his glory was seen on earth, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father." He also says of Jesus Christ, in his epistle, "This is the true God, and eternal life." St. Paul speaks of the appearance of "The great God, and our Saviour," or "Our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, to judge the world." And again calls him, "God over all, blessed forever." So, in the revelation of St. John, Christ is represented as saying of himself, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and was, and is to come, the Almighty."

If now, we look at the attributes given to the Son of God, we shall find them to be divine. He is declared to be eternal, without beginning of days, or end of life—unchangeable—the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. Knowing all things—knowing what is in man—searching the hearts and the reins, as present everywhere in the midst of his people, to hear prayers offered from all parts of the earth. Eternity, unchangeableness, infinite wisdom, ubiquity, omnipotence: these are all attributes of God; and these are ascribed to our Lord Jesus Christ.

His actions equally declare his divinity. By what he has done, is doing, and will do, we prove it. According to the testimony of Scripture, "He created the world by his power." (John i. 3; Heb. i. 10.) He governs it by his providence, especially his

church in the world. He redeemed it by his mercy, and will judge it at the last day.

This may all be proved by plain texts of Scripture, and is enough to establish the truth of what we assert. We mention some texts, proving that the Son of God created the world. St. John says, (chap. i. verse 3,) "All things were made by Him, and without him was not any thing made that was made." The same is declared in Hebrews i. 10: "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thy hands."

The Holy Spirit is also described in Scripture as a person, and a divine person. He is spoken of as "sending out ministers on missionary work," as in Acts xii. 2: "The Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Paul for the work whereunto I have called them." St. Paul declares the Holy Spirit's identity with God, when he says to Ananias, "Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God;" having just before said, "Why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?" We find the Holy Spirit spoken of as the author of miracles, the inspirer of prophets and apostles, the searcher of hearts, and the comforter of Christians. "He is in God, and knows the mind of God." The bodies of men are his temple, and, by being his, are the temple of God. And he is joined with God the Father, not only in baptism, as set forth in our text, but in supplications for grace and peace. To resist the Holy Ghost is the same as to resist God; as St. Stephen says to the Jews: "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost, as did your fathers." And the voice of the Holy Ghost is the voice of God.

Abundant evidence can be brought from Scripture, to prove the divinity of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. And in different parts of Scripture, the same actions are ascribed to all three persons, showing that they are one God, from everlasting to everlasting. And here let it be noticed, that when we speak of the divinity of Christ, we mean his proper divinity, his oneness of essence with God the Father. Some men, who reject the doctrine of the Trinity, believe that Christ partook of the divine nature, and thus beguile the unwary. They use the word divine, but they do not use it in the sense in which the church uses it, when she sets forth the triune God. Now this union of three

persons in one Godhead, is revealed to us as a fact in connexion with our salvation. The mode of union is not revealed. No attempt is made in Scripture to explain how such a thing can be. And the curious inquiries of man into this mystery can never be satisfied. The doctrine which so much excites the wonder of man, and tries his faith, was declared not as an abstract truth, but as a fact in the scheme of redemption. And they who have humility and faith enough to receive a share in the redemption, will find no difficulty in receiving the doctrine of the Trinity, just as it is taught, in connexion with man's redemption, and as setting forth the glory of that redemption.

In this way it has pleased God to make known the doctrine. Many persons insist on knowing what God has not offered to teach: the mode of union between the three persons. This they cannot comprehend, and so they reject what is really revealed, and what they might humbly receive, and are content to be unbelievers. The doctrine of the Trinity being a fact of redemption, setting forth the glorious agency by which man's salvation is accomplished, we are not surprised to find it embodied in the very sign of regeneration, the rite of initiation into the church, to which the covenant of grace is given. Into the bonds of that covenant, the baptized person enters. He vows repentance, faith, and obedience, that is, he promises, "to renounce all sin, and the authority of the author of sin; to believe all the articles of the Christian faith, and to keep God's holy will and commandments." Now in the "Catechism," which explains the Christian profession, the baptized child is taught that, in the Creed, or articles of belief, he learns "chiefly, to believe in God the Father, who made him, and all the world; in God the Son, who redeemed him, and all mankind; and in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctified him, and all the people of God."

Here, then, is the doctrine of the Trinity, as it is set forth in its practical use, and here is the amplification of the baptismal formula of faith, which is the simplest mode of expressing that great truth which is the groundwork of the whole system of revealed doctrine. Christ, "the Word," the way, the truth, and the life, says to his chosen apostles, "I came to save them that were lost; I came down from heaven to do the will of him that sent me." He who said to the Jews, "Before Abraham was, I

am," and also, "I, and my Father, are one;" who spake of the Holy Ghost, whom the Father would send in his name, and of that person as having divine power, said to his apostles, "Go, make disciples unto me of all nations; convert them from ignorance and error, unto the knowledge of God, and the true faith: and let the profession of their membership of the church which I shall establish, bear witness to the mysterious truth of the undivided Trinity; their baptism being administered, 'in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.'"

This great and mysterious doctrine, thus intimated to the child of God, at his sacramental regeneration, is taught fully and clearly in all the Scriptures written for his learning. It is taught, not to amuse his fancy, or task his power of speculation, but with a strictly practical view, for the trial of faith, for the direction of worship, and for the promotion of obedience. The Christian is called to believe in God, as not only the Father, who created him, and condemned him for transgression, but likewise as the Son, who in human form and nature, (assumed for the purpose,) redeemed him from sin and death; and as the Holy Ghost, "the sanctifier of the faithful," who helps man's striving after the holiness which is the end of faith, and the evidence of its saving efficacy. This doctrine, thus exhibited, while it magnifies the redemption in which alone man can trust, is calculated to deepen the humility, and strengthen the tenacity of faith; to give warmth and reverence to devotion, and to quicken the heart with earnest desires after holiness.

And they who reject it are usually those who reject the offered redemption, in connexion with which it is taught. They who would do without Christ's sacrifice as an atonement for their sins, deny his proper divinity. The same spirit of unbelief prevails in both cases. May you all, my hearers, who feel your need of Christ's redeeming sacrifice, receive the Scripture testimony as to its dignity and value. View Christ your Lord, "as one mighty to save," because Almighty; view the Holy Spirit as a powerful and ready help, because ever-present and all-powerful. And, as you were baptized into the name of the holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, so let it be your earnest and continual endeavour to maintain your relation to God the Father, as adopted children of grace; to God the Son, as ransomed believers; and God the

Holy Ghost, as consecrated temples of the Spirit, sanctified for his service, through his influence and indwelling. To do this effectually, make good use of all the precious means of grace which have been provided in the church of Christ. Be earnest and constant in prayer; receive with meekness the ingrafted word, and in the holy ordinance of the Supper, "feed on the Lord your God by faith with thanksgiving." Strive thus earnestly, in humble, trusting faith, during your time of trial on earth, and you will, through the prevailing grace of Christ Jesus our Lord, be prepared for that state of higher knowledge and supreme blessedness, in which you will see clearly, what it now dazzles you to gaze on, the glorious mystery of the holy Trinity.

And now unto God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all honour and glory, &c.

SERMON LVIII.

THE PASTORAL OFFICE.—RECIPROCAL DUTIES.

“Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”—1 CORINTHIANS iv. 1, 2.

ST. PAUL here defines his position towards the Corinthians. And that we may distinctly see it, we must of course understand the meaning of the terms used to declare it. Fearing lest, from what he had said in former chapters of his inspiration, he might draw to himself credit for power and authority independent of Christ his Lord, he wishes them to regard him as only a servant of Christ in the great work of preaching the gospel, or glad tidings of salvation. For this is the true meaning of gospel, glad tidings, or the declaration of that which should make the heart glad, God's mercy and love in the redemption through his Son Christ Jesus. This great truth he was appointed by Christ to preach. And all the particular doctrines, harmonizing with and linked to the cardinal one, of salvation through Christ alone, were committed to him as a steward of Christ's goods, to dispense them faithfully to the people to whom he ministered. He calls himself, and his brethren in the holy ministry, “stewards of the mysteries of God.” And he uses this word “mysteries,” not in the common meaning of the word as now applied to religious doctrines, implying things which we are puzzled to understand; but in reference to solemn and saving truths which were for a long time secret, and only lately revealed to man. Salvation through Jesus Christ was ordained in the beginning; but it was not declared to man till the fulness of time had come, for Christ to give himself a ransom for

man. Until that time it was a mystery, or thing kept secret. And St. Paul speaks of it in that sense in this passage, as also in many other passages of his epistles.

We have only to put in the place of the word "mysteries," the precious truths of divine revelation through our Lord Jesus Christ, and we shall have a clear statement of the apostle's meaning. We have his position well defined. "Christian brethren," he would say to the Corinthian converts, "count me as one of the chosen servants of the Lord, ordained to the work of building up his kingdom in the world, as a steward of his household the church, bound to dispense his spiritual goods, and accountable to him for the faithful discharge of my office." Now such as he was, in all the common work of a teacher and a pastor, is every one who is rightly and truly ordained, as a minister in the church of Christ. He is appointed by Christ's own authority, regularly transmitted, and as real as if received from Christ in person. The church confers on him authority, through her recognised chief minister, in the name of Christ, and under the sanction of the Holy Ghost, invoked for the solemn anointing.

And while doing this, she sets forth clearly the duties of the ministerial office, and demands of the man who received it vows of faithfulness, which an honest man cannot lightly take, and an unfaithful man cannot without guilt or danger break. Give heed, then, for a short time, while we endeavour to show the sacred character of the pastoral office, the duties which devolve upon the pastor, and the consequent relative duties of the people to whom he ministers.

We are led to speak plainly and fully of the pastoral relation, in its origin as well as its incidents, because it is not viewed generally in its true light, as involving the highest responsibilities which man can take upon himself. Many view it as a convenient arrangement, by which a man, selected for the purpose, is placed in charge of a congregation, to lead their devotion in public worship, and to treat them to an interesting discourse on Sunday morning; for which service, as "the labourer is worthy of his hire," they are willing to pay pew rent. By others the minister is regarded as, indeed, a spiritual comforter, whose duty it is to intercede for his people at the throne of grace under all their trials, to give them consolation under affliction, and peace of mind under

the chastisement of the Holy Spirit convincing them of sin; and at the close of life, to make the passage through the grave appear bright with the rays of future blessedness. This he is expected to do for them of himself, without regard to their own character. He is held bound to supply all their spiritual wants, and to have piety enough to make up all their deficiencies. How false an estimate of the pastoral relation! The office of the Christian minister is one of such high dignity and weighty responsibility, that he may well say, on considering it fully, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

The dignity of the office will appear, if we consider its divine origin. The maxim of Holy Scripture, as laid down in the Epistle to the Hebrews, is, that "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." Here, then, we have the principle, that an outward call to the priesthood in the church of God is necessary. For Aaron's was an outward call, capable of being proved to those to whom he ministered. And that no change was made, or to be made, in God's requirements under the Christian system, is shown by what follows the maxim just quoted; for the sacred writer says,—that even Christ himself did not take the sacred office without an open designation from heaven. "So also Christ glorified not himself to be made a high priest, but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee." And this is fully supported by the authority of our Lord, who thus gave his commission to the apostles after his resurrection. "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he said this, he breathed on them and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained."

Now it is clear that the ministry then committed to the apostles, had all the likeness to Christ's which it could have. The "even so send I you," must refer to Christ's mission as a preacher and a priest;—for, as a sacrifice and a ransom, he could have no successors. As a prophet and a priest of the new dispensation, Christ received his unction and credentials from God the Father, with power to ordain others to those offices. Now as he was sent by the Father, so he sent the apostles. And this commission, marked by a sign of anointing to office, breathing on them and say-

ing, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," had this promise of perpetuity annexed to it, (Matt. xxviii. 20,) "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Now, as Jesus could not be personally with them in the flesh, to the end of the world, he could only mean that he would sanction all authority vested in them, which they should commit to their successors, and that there would always be ministers, rightly claiming that authority, whom he would sanction as their successors. With this promise on record, we are sure that the apostolic succession will always be preserved, as long as there is any need of a Christian ministry.

We have said that the commission given to the apostles, was marked by signs of anointing to office. Let us look at this closely for a moment. Our Lord said, when he had breathed on them, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." Now they received the Holy Ghost in its fulness, afterwards, at the day of Pentecost. What, then, did Christ mean to impart at this time? Nothing, surely, but authority to be his ministers—just such a sanction as he received from God the Father. The gift of the Holy Ghost then bestowed, was that ecclesiastical measure of it which was necessary to the appointment then made. It was as distinct from the influence imparted on the day of Pentecost, as the outward call to the ministry is from the inward sanctification, which fits one for the successful discharge of that ministry. Authority to exercise the ministry, then, is the gift of Christ, conferred through the agency of the Holy Ghost, whose seal was given to Christ's own appointment. When he was set apart for the ministry, the Holy Ghost was present, to bear witness to his designation by the Father. And when he set apart his apostles, the same witness was present. Hence our Lord's words were true in this particular: "As my Father sent me, even so send I you."

We may now understand what the church means, when, in the office for ordaining a priest, she bids the bishop say to the designated minister,—“Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a priest in the church of God, now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands.” The bishop claims no power to bestow grace, except that ecclesiastical measure of it given to him for conferring orders, and signified by the words used by Christ, as the outward anointing to the ministry. This gift of the Holy Ghost is very different from the grace of sanctification, given to

every pious believer in Christ. The inward grace may make a man fit to be called—it does not call him to the Christian ministry. He must have the outward call, through the laying on of hands, blessed by the Holy Ghost for the purpose, of one who has received Christ's authority to ordain. Such outward call the ministers, who are appointed to extend and build up our branch of the church of Christ, have received. The nature of that office, the extent and responsibilities of it, may be learned from the injunctions and requirements of the church, in the form prescribed for the ordaining of priests. May God give grace to pastor and people rightly to estimate them!

Hear, then, first, the solemn injunction of the ordaining bishop, to the candidates for the priesthood:—"We exhort you, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye have in remembrance, into how high a dignity and to how weighty an office and charge ye are called; that is to say, to be messengers, watchmen and stewards of the Lord; to teach and premonish, to feed and provide for the Lord's family; to seek for Christ's sheep that are dispersed abroad, and for his children, who are in the midst of this evil world, that they may be saved through Christ forever. Have always, therefore, printed in your remembrance, how great a treasure is committed to your charge. For they are the sheep of Christ, which he bought with his death, and for whom he shed his blood. The church and congregation, whom you must serve, is his spouse and his body. And if it shall happen that the same church, or any member thereof, do take any hurt or hinderance by reason of your negligence, ye know the greatness of the fault, and also the horrible punishment that will ensue. Wherefore, consider with yourselves the end of the ministry towards the children of God, towards the spouse and body of Christ; and see that ye never cease your labour, your care and diligence, until ye have done all that in you lieth, according to your bounden duty, to bring all such as are or shall be committed to your charge, unto that agreement in the faith and knowledge of God, and to that ripeness and perfectness of age in Christ, that there be no place left among you either for error in religion, or for viciousness in life."

Now, from such language as this, a juster notion than generally prevails may be formed of the pastoral office. It will be

seen at once that it is nothing less than an appointment, under authority from Christ Jesus, to proclaim the salvation which he bought with his blood, and to urge all to whom it is proclaimed, to accept it by faith; to cast away the works of darkness, and to be the children of light. It is a commission, publicly given and deliberately taken, to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, to offer pardon to the sinner, on condition of faith and repentance, and not only pardon, but also the gift of his grace—the help of the Holy Spirit, to sanctify the soul, and prepare it for a future rest in his heavenly kingdom. The Christian minister is, therefore, bound by his vows to declare the whole counsel of God; to lay open to the view of his people the corruption of their own hearts, that they may apply the remedy provided in the gospel; to assure them that, however they may wrap themselves in their morality, and hope to pass the scrutiny of the gospel, they are all sinners in the sight of God, born in sin, and unable to do works acceptable to God, without the help of the Holy Spirit imparted through faith in Christ.

With this assurance, supported by the word of God, he should connect the gracious offer of pardon through the atoning mercy of Christ, calling upon all to profess faith in the Saviour, to observe his ordinances, and to keep his commandments; urging them, as they value their own souls, to flee from the wrath to come. This is the first duty of the Christian minister, to bring his people to Christ, to persuade them to believe in him, in order to be restored to the favour of God; and be made heirs of eternal life. He takes charge of a parish, with the understanding, that his people are by nature subject to sin, needing to be “renewed” in mind and heart, through faith, and the ordinances of Christ. He has a “message from God” to them, a message of love and peace, if they will hear and obey; of wrath, if they will despise the offer of mercy. He bids them in God’s name accept the covenant, which God has made in Christ the Redeemer. To that covenant they must become a party, if they would have the benefit of it. Having persuaded them, if he may be so happy, to make themselves part-takers of it, by a true faith, shown, as it must be, formally, in the open use of the ordinances of Christ, he is bound to use all diligence, that they may be taught how to exercise themselves in godliness, for the furtherance of their growth in grace. He is

bound by solemn vows to guard their minds from error in doctrines, their hearts from evil affections, their feet from walking in slippery paths.

Turn once more to the ordinal, and see the solemn promise made to the bishop, speaking in the name of God and of his church:—"Will you, then, give your faithful diligence always so to minister the doctrine and sacraments and the discipline of Christ, as the Lord hath commanded, and as this church hath received the same, according to the commandments of God, so that you may teach the people committed to your care and charge, with all diligence to keep and observe the same?" "I will so do, by the help of the Lord," is the answer publicly made. Again, "Will you be ready, with all faithful diligence, to banish and drive away from the church all erroneous and strange doctrines, contrary to God's word; and to use both public and private monitions and exhortations, as well to the sick as to the whole, within your cures, as need shall require, and occasion shall be given?" Answer. "I will, the Lord being my helper."

Now, with these vows taken before God and the church, shall he see any of his flock led away, or in danger of being led away from the saving truth of God's word, to erroneous and strange doctrines, and not sound the note of warning? Can he keep a good conscience towards God, and his soul free from the guilt of their destruction, if he see any of his people, whether communicants or not, (for all his congregation are his cure,) casting away their spiritual peace, their eternal joy and glory, for the sake of ungodly and heathenish indulgences, and not earnestly rebuke in love, yea, even in holy indignation? He has vowed to give public as well as private monition and exhortation, to all sick or well, as occasion shall be given or need require. To the sick it must be private; to the well, it may, and should be, for the most part, public.

Well, brethren and friends, duties are reciprocal. If the minister must exhort and warn, the people should hear and heed the warning and exhortation. They should not only bear with him, but should also honour and esteem, yea, love him the more, for the well-meant counsel and reproof. "Am I become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" says the apostle to the Corinthians, whom he reproveth. And is not the minister of Christ

sometimes prompted to make the like appeal? For reproof, like affliction, for the present seemeth to be grievous, but it worketh in the end righteousness and peace. And the people sometimes complain of the pastor's monitions to the well, and of the want of counsel and comfort to the sick. "He is ready enough to exhort and reprove us in church, but slow to bring us consolation and help when we are sick." We allude to this, in connexion with the vows of the minister, because the people, who sometimes find fault with him for not visiting them in sickness, are themselves to be blamed for not making known their need of pastoral care. He is presumed to have not only ubiquity, but omniscience. He is supposed to know, without being informed, who is sick among his flock. But if the people will turn to the Rubric, at the beginning of the office for the visitation of the sick, they will read thus: "When any person is sick, notice shall be given thereof to the minister of the parish." Unless this is done, a complaint of neglect will come with a bad grace from any who profess to be churchmen.

Let all who acknowledge the parochial relation, both the sick and the well, graciously receive the counsel and the reproof which the minister may deem it his duty to give. For if he duly estimates his sacred office, he is one of the servants of Christ, "who watch for souls as they that must give account" to their divine Master. The same apostle who bids his converts look upon him as the minister of Christ to them, and the steward of the mysteries of God, makes this earnest and affectionate appeal, as he contemplates the rendering of his account: "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye, in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?"

To prepare the souls of his people for the glorious state, to which faith in Jesus looks as its final reward, is the chief object of the minister's care and labour. It is, or should be, his constant endeavour, his ardent desire, and his fervent prayer, that all who are placed under his charge may at the last be partakers of the bliss which is promised to the joint heirs with Christ of the heavenly inheritance. This is "the hope" which is his "crown of rejoicing." This gives earnestness to his preaching, fixedness to his purpose, and energy to all his efforts in the discharge of his high and holy calling. This sustains him under all the cares, and trials, and crosses, of his pastoral office; helps him to endure patiently the

waywardness of his people; "to be instant in season and out of season," in exhorting the careless, comforting the desponding, and raising up the fallen by the timely ministrations of the word. How vast the responsibility of the Christian minister! How enduring the influence of the pastoral relation! It ends not here on earth. The souls which are the subjects of it will bear its impress forever. They are to be brought, through ministerial intervention, into union with Christ, and, through pastoral care and oversight, kept in the way of salvation, until duty shall give place to recompense.

In the day of final reckoning it will be known if the appointed messenger has borne a true message from the Lord: the watchman has given timely warning; the steward has faithfully dispensed the mysteries of God;—and the souls of his people will declare it;—for their joy will be his glory. Their testimony to his faithfulness will be his crown of rejoicing. May it be our lot to have such testimony, with the welcome of our Lord to his heavenly kingdom.

SERMON LIX.

FUNERAL SERMON ON THE DEATH OF REV. S. S. LEWIS, D. D.

“Hold such in reputation: because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life.”—PHILIPPIANS ii. 29, 30.

THE solemn occasion which has made the house of God the house of mourning, suggests wholesome reflections of various character, for which the Holy Scriptures furnish various appropriate texts. It has a voice of warning, in common with the daily instances of mortality, which, from their very frequency, fail to impress the minds of those who must also die. It speaks in tones of tender persuasion, through the exhibition of a lovely instance of a Christian's peaceful departure to the rest which remaineth for the people of God. And it has stirring notes of triumph through the victory given by a risen Saviour to one of his humble trusting followers and devoted servants, such as St. Paul utters when he contemplates his own final crown at the glorious appearing of the Saviour.

To such reflections of either kind we might lead you, my friends, by many fitting texts. We might bid you consider the end of all flesh, if the familiar turning of the sod for the narrow house of your fellow mortals has for you no memento, by the reading of that doom, “Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” And if you are prone to put off the serious work of preparation for death, under the too common and fatal delusion, that there will be time enough for that by and by, we might quote the warning, “Your life is a vapour which soon vanishes away.”

Were it our special purpose to lead the irreligious to a hearty embracing of the faith which gives on earth a foretaste of heaven, we could take, in rich clusters, words of inspiration which set

forth its blessedness. Or did we seek to convince the skeptic of the reality of the professed influence of that triumphant hope which bears the believer onward through trials and persecutions, the apostle might speak, as in his epistle to Timothy, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of life," &c.

But this is no ordinary funeral occasion. It has indeed, like the case of many a faithful follower of Jesus, its persuasive example, and like that of every frail mortal, its solemn warning. But if it had no more than this, we should leave it, as we are wont to do, to make its own silent appeal. We are gathered together here to place beneath this sacred desk, in their final resting place, the mortal remains of one who, for many years, ministered to the congregation here worshipping, who here long fed the flock committed to his charge with the bread of life, and warned sinners of that death eternal, the dread of which gives to death temporal its chief sting. A mourning people have come to bury their pastor, to mingle their sorrows and their sympathies with each other, as well as with the bereaved family of their spiritual father. Brethren in the sacred ministry have also come to do, for a brother, what may soon be done for one of them, say the solemn service for the burial of the dead. While then we all with meek submission, God's grace helping us thereto, would mourn the loss of one long loved, we may be permitted to show how great a loss we have sustained.

The history of his life, during the greater part of his ministry in the church, is the history of this parish. And we can therefore appeal to many here present for testimony to the appropriateness of the application which we have made of the language of St. Paul, in reference to Epaphroditus, his faithful fellow labourer, who had been brought nigh unto death by his self-devotion to the cause of Christ. "Hold such in reputation: because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life." Your deceased pastor counted not his life dear to him, so that he might win souls to Christ, and promote the spiritual welfare of his church. His single-hearted devotedness was peculiarly strong, his desire to spend and be spent in the service of his flock was

unsparing. All who have enjoyed his ministry during its whole course, can bear witness to the burning zeal and wasting application with which he discharged its many and severe duties. We speak of familiar things when we speak to them of his self-denying labours. But there are some, perhaps, who have known him only as nigh unto death, as he has seemed to be for several years. To them it may be interesting to make some brief biographical notes of our deceased brother.

Rev. Samuel Seymour Lewis, D. D., was born in Vermont in 1805. At an early age, (fifteen or sixteen years,) he embraced the Christian faith, an age when religious impressions are usually very strong. Youths of either sex consider this, and make the Christian profession with a true and ardent affection for Christ, our adorable Redeemer. His collegiate education was received at Trinity, (then Washington) college, Hartford, Connecticut, where he subsequently became a tutor. Having completed his course of theology in the general seminary of the Protestant Episcopal church, New York, he came to Alabama in 1832, and became the rector of Christ church at Tuscaloosa. After a faithful ministry of three years, he was invited to this city, in the summer of 1835. The parish was then very feeble and small. The untilled field before him, however, was large, and, to one of his energetic character, very inviting. He laboured diligently, in season and out of season, night and day, summer and winter, in sunshine and in rain. Day was too short for his plans of ministerial action. Night afforded little resting time. He loved his Master and that Master's work. He loved his people, first as the disciples of his own dear Lord, and then as the special flock of his daily tending. Many of you know that love, have enjoyed it and reciprocated it. Some of you have owed your first religious impressions to his faithful ministrations, have been led to the Saviour by his guiding hand, and have been tenderly nursed into spiritual vigour, by the sincere milk of the word, and sustained by the strong meat dispensed with liberal hand. And you surely can feel the force of the apostle's allusion, when he says to his own converts, "Though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers."

As your spiritual father, he was peculiarly dear to you. Then consider, while you mourn his early departure, in the middle of

the term of life, that some of his early strength was spent in your behalf; that but, for his excessive labour, you might have failed to attain the hope, which now sustains you, of eternal life through the redeeming love of Christ. The pastoral relation, continued for a long course of time, is a very endearing one. The various offices which a minister is called to discharge, bring him into close connexion with his people, and the associations which cling to the memory are tender and hallowed. The joining in holy matrimony, under the solemn sanction of the church, those whose hearts are knit together in love, the receiving from the hands of parents, their children offered to the Saviour in baptism, and entrusting them, sealed as Christ's own lambs, to the spiritual nursing of their sponsors, and perhaps, the binding up of their bruised hearts with the oil of consolation, when those parents are called to mourn, because Christ, not satisfied with their nursing, takes the fondlings to himself; these are offices which bind Christ's ministers to their flocks with tender and enduring ties.

In these various offices your late pastor endeared himself greatly to many of you. You may well mourn for him. But take heed how you mourn. Consider how you may best mourn. Would you show your love for him in a way that he will approve? Let him, as his spirit follows you, see you faithful to that holy calling, in which his life was given to build you up. Do you appreciate his devotion to your service? Cherish with grateful affection those dearest to him, whom that very self-denying zeal has left bereaved and desolate; soothe with your tender sympathies, and sustain by your substantial benefactions, the dear ones whose widowed and orphaned state might have been long deferred, had he regarded his life more than your spiritual welfare.

He would rejoice in these evidences of sincere attachment; for he was true to his profession. He was "an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile." When he said, "I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ," he stood forth a true disciple. Whatever he professed to be, he truly was, in his creed and in his walk. He was clear and strong in faith, correct and exemplary in his deportment, kind and courteous as a Christian, firm and uncompromising as a churchman. He loved Christ who made the church, and he loved the church because Christ was her Maker. He was in the highest degree conscientious. His conscientiousness led him to

that prodigal expenditure of his strength which shortened his term of life. "His Master's work must be done, and he must labour while he had any strength." This was his constant maxim. Hence he laboured even when debilitated by sickness. He may have misjudged. But it was zeal for Christ which prompted him. And who shall measure, by any rules of prudent calculation, the wasting zeal of a conscientious servant of a self-denying, crucified Saviour?

Who shall presume to say to the chosen minister of that Lord who bids us all to take up the cross and follow him, "Thus far shouldest thou go and no farther?" Brethren, it may be in the dispensation of God's providence, that the early death of one of his ministers is made more profitable to his people than a protracted life. Lingeringsickness may be continued preaching—the edifying and encouraging preaching of a powerful example. Such we regard the protracted illness of our deceased brother. Few could have visited him during his career of suffering without being struck with the patient waiting for deliverance from the chastening hand of God. His confidence in God's goodness, as well as wisdom, faltered not. His faith wrestled continually with the infirmities of the flesh, and though he longed sometimes to be at rest, yet his constant prayer was, "Thy will, O God, be done!" Even when life was only suffering, he patiently endured, strengthened by faith in that Saviour who freely suffered for us. And if to love the Lord Jesus, and feel his comforting presence, be a foretaste of heaven, our departed brother surely had it. Faithful in all the duties of his calling, in health and in sickness, faithful unto the end, we believe, that according to promise, he has gone to receive the crown of glory. Mourn not for him, then, brethren, for, whilst in his case, "to live was Christ, to die was gain." Short as his term of labour was, God has given him, we trust, many souls, as the fruits of his ministry.

Brethren in the ministry, ours too may be short. Let us strive to win many souls to be the jewels of our crown. To us this solemn scene brings a touching lesson. Two ministers of this parish have been called to their final reward within ten short months. To us the Scripture says, "Let your loins be girded, and your lamps burning." "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching!"

Brethren of the congregation, you are about to consign to its resting place, in the vault beneath the chancel, the body of your beloved pastor. It is the spot chosen by himself. There he has for several years expressed an earnest desire to be laid. We have heard him declare it as the earnest desire of his heart. That heart bounded with joy on reaching this city to die here—here with the people whom he loved. Faithful, devoted, affectionate pastor. “Hold such in reputation.” In his domestic character, we have not yet contemplated the deceased. That it was in the highest degree lovely and exemplary, they best know who are most bereaved. A widowed heart clings to his memory with a devotion that grudges the unsparing zeal which shortened his days on earth. For her consolation, we would affectionately suggest, that the same God who has taken her partner from her bosom, has declared himself, in special terms, the widow’s God, and the Father of the fatherless. To the Lord let her cling for comfort and protection, being assured that he will never leave her nor forsake her.

Let the recollection of her husband’s faithful life and peaceful death be her continual solace. And while she endeavours to bring up her children in the nurture of the Lord, she needs no guaranty of their temporal welfare. The good name and hallowed memory of their father will be a sure heritage: his Christian graces their greatest riches.

In the instance of mortality before us, all here present may find either warning, instruction or comfort. To the careless, who live as if they were not mortal, assurance is given that all are liable to sickness and death; that God does not spare even those whom he especially loves. How then shall they hope to escape? Let them see how the believer can bear suffering and meet death, and be wise unto salvation. The humble Christian, who finds many trials to his faith, in his way through life, and either doubts his piety, or distrusts God’s word, may see an example of a long tried servant of the Lord, meeting and overcoming trials of severe character, sustained by the same faith which he professes. He may see the abiding efficacy of faith in one, who, loving his Master and longing to labour until death, is called to endure, for a long time, sickness that precludes labour, content to suffer for him whose cause may thus be served.

The minister of Christ is reminded that, when no longer able to discharge the active duties of his holy office, he may still serve the cause of his divine Master, by the silent but eloquent preaching of a consistent life. Let him remember that although thus disabled, he is on a level with his fellow Christians not ordained, yet the influence of his example may be more widely felt, and that they may counteract by practical inconsistency, much of the wholesome influence of their preaching. Let all who hold the sacred office strive to honour and glorify their divine Lord, though called to do it through the sharing of his sufferings.

And let all be encouraged to a patient submission and a trusting faith, by the assurance afforded in the case of our deceased brother, that God will be ever nigh to those who seek him, and be cheered with the hope, which he heartily embraced, of a crown of glory in the kingdom of his eternal Redeemer. Sustained by a true and lively faith, may we all be able to say at the close of life, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

THE END.

